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WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE AS WOMEN: MEANING AND CONTEXT

by

CHERYL LYNNE MALMO

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE AS WOMEN: MEANING AND CONTEXT submitted by CHERYL LYNNE MALMO in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Dedication

I wish to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my cousin, Lois Wells, who throughout her lifetime rejected the definition of women as Other and lived her life as a true Subject. Although she did not know it, she was a positive role model for me and I shall always remember and admire her independent spirit, her commitment to both her work and family, and her love of life.

Abstract

The concept of women as psychological Other, proposed by deBeauvoir in The Second Sex and assumed by many researchers to be an accurate description of women, is criticized for being simplistic and androcentric. In order to investigate the nature of women's psychological experience as women, this study used a phenomenological-type approach to examine the experiences of 13 women and the meaning to them of being women. A critical theory-type, feminist analysis was employed to examine the context of the participant's lives - factors which were dialectically related to their experiences as women. It was determined that the meanings women gave to their experiences could be categorized into six positive and six negative meanings. It was also determined that any one dimension of women's experience could result in a positive and/or negative meaning.

The negative meanings of being a woman were demonstrated to be related to women's experience of being defined or treated as Other. This did not necessarily mean that the women accepted the treatment as legitimate or identified with the definition of themselves as Other, however. Examination of the positive meanings revealed that the women experienced themselves psychologically as Subject in spite of their formal definition as Other and in ways that moved beyond the boundaries prescribed by the feminine stereotype or that challenged their formal definition. Further, it was demonstrated that what may appear on the surface to be behavior which reflects a woman's psychological experience of herself as Other may actually be a public accommodation to the feminine stereotype, employed as a coping stategy. Conversely, it was demonstrated that what on the surface may appear to be behavior which reflects a woman's psychological experience of herself as Subject may sometimes hide a private experience of Otherness.

It was concluded that women's psychological experience involved both their experience of themselves as Other and Subject, that this complexity existed on several dimensions at the same time, and, that depending on circumstance, it could both remain relatively constant and change over time. The need for research which examines both the meaning and context of experience (and which employs both phenomenological-type and critical theory-type methods) is affirmed.

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I. Introduction

A. Starting Point: Concept of the 'Other'

The publication of Simone deBeauvoir's book, The Second Sex (English version, 1952), marked the beginning of an epoch in the study of women. In essence, deBeauvoir provided an analysis of the secondary place of women in relation to men, within patriarchal society. She demonstrated that women have always been subordinated to men – in the writings of history, myth, and literature, as well as in the writings of influential biologists, psychoanalysts, sociologists, and philosophers. In doing so, she not only provided ample evidence that women's inferiority was not innate, she also 'demystified' women by putting women's behavior into a social and historical context. She states,

> One is not born but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. (p. 249)

deBeauvoir's contribution to our understanding of women's situation is unprecedented. Volumes of books and research articles from many disciplines support her contention that women have been (and still are) subordinate to men, that they are perceived and treated as "Other". However, deBeauvoir interpreted the concept of otherness to be a fundamental category of human thought, "as primordial as consciousness itself" (p. xvi). Basing her interpretation in Hegel's essentialist philosophy, she assumed that,

> We find in consciousness itself a fundamental hostility toward every other consciousness; the subject can be posed only in being opposed – he sets himself up as the essential, as opposed to the other, the inessential, the object (Hegel, cited by deBeauvoir, 1952, p. xvii).

To this assumption deBeauvoir added a new twist. She maintained that while men see themselves as subject and women as object – as Other, women do not make a reciprocal claim – they fail to see themselves as subject and men as object. This results from women's adoption of the male perspective of themselves as object in relation to men, and their acceptance of themselves as inferior. For deBeauvoir, women's identity rests on their acceptance of themselves as the second sex, viewed in relation to and therefore dependent upon men. In her words,

> The drama of women lies in this conflict between the fundamental aspirations of every subject (ego) – who always regards the self as essential – and the compulsions of a situation in which she is the inessential (1952, p. xxviii).

deBeauvoir recognizes that social factors work against women acting as subject. However, she sees the solution as residing within individual women. "If woman seems to be the inessential, it is because she herself fails to bring about this change" (p. xviii). Women are assumed to have the freedom to choose the terms of their existence.

There are some difficulties both with deBeauvoir's philosophical assumptions and with her theory of the psychology of women. One could argue that original conflict is not the basic dynamic of human psychology that deBeauvoir believes it to be. Miller (1976) suggests that the concept of "mankind" as basically self-seeking, competitive, aggressive, and destructive is based on an interpretation of the world as experienced by men. It overlooks the fact that millions of people, most of them women, have spent most of their lives giving to others. Of major concern to this study, however, is deBeauvoir's differentiation of women's psychology based on the assumption that women accept the dominant perception of themselves as Other, fail to see themselves as subject and men as object. This theory is sexist in that it assumes that the male experience, if indeed it is different, is somehow superior and represents the model for what is human. This theory is also simplistic because, even though it may be true that women do perceive themselves as Other on some levels, they may on other levels experience themselves as Subject. While devaluing themselves in some respects, they may in other ways, value themselves highly.

That deBeauvoir's theory is both sexist and simplistic derives from her perception of women from a male point-of-view. That she adopted a masculinist perspective in <u>The Second Sex</u> is easily demonstrated. In her chapter, "The Woman in Love," she quotes Byron and Nietzsche to demonstrate that loves means something different to women and men. Implicit to this is the sexist valuing of men as capable of something beyond the capacity of women (who are seen only in relation to men). Both points are demonstrated in the following:

> The single word love in fact signifies two different things for man and woman. What women understands by love is clear enough: it is not only devotion, it is a total gift of body and soul, without reservation, without regard for anything whatever. This unconditional nature of her love is what

> makes it a faith, [1]the only one she has. As for man, if he loves a woman, what he wants is that love from her; he is in consequence far from postulating the same sentiment for himself as for woman; if there should be men who also felt that desire for complete abandonment, upon my word, they would not be men. (Nietzsche, cited by deBeauvoir, 1952, pp. 603-604).

McCall (1979) suggests that deBeauvoir's writing was also influenced by her life-long companion, Jean-Paul Sartre. Certainly there is evidence in The Second Sex that deBeauvoir adopted Sartre's existential philosophy. She states, "I believe that she (woman) has the power to choose between the assertion of her transcendence and her alienation as object" (p. 45). Sartre's existentialism is based on a freedom asserted against nature, a nature embodied in the so-called female principle or feminine myth (McCall, 1979). deBeauvoir adopted this interpretation, evidenced in the following passage, "Man seeks in woman the Other as Nature and as his fellow being. But we know what ambivalent feelings Nature inspires in man" (p. 133). What deBeauvoir does not explore is the possibility of any other reality for women, other than that defined by men. Women's behavior was not examined in its own right - it was only perceived through male eyes and judged according to male values. A case can be made that, just as deBeauvoir's perception of women was limited because she viewed women only from a masculinist perspective, her theory of the psychology women was also limited. Felstiner's (1980) critique of deBeauvoir's concept of women as psychological Other supports this notion. She maintains that deBeauvoir did not deal with the diversity of women, did not recognize the various forms of women's power, and did not view the consciousness as a true dialectic between an individual and the course of events. While deBeauvoir has recognized the first two limitations of her theorizing, she apparently persists in her belief in the dependence of women's consciousness upon their formal definition. Felstiner states,

> Simone deBeauvoir now believes that she should have argued the primacy of social reality, of material conditions, over structure of consciousness (1980, pp. 265-266).

Consistently, throughout her writing, deBeauvoir uses the term "woman" rather than "women." For example, she refers to woman's libido (p. 35), woman's children (p. 75), woman is lost (p. 245), the sexual frustration of woman (p. 410), woman's temptation (p. 494), woman as victim (p. 579), the loving woman (p. 610). The concept

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[1]Nietzsche's emphasis

of "woman" as opposed to "women" is problematic in several ways. Sullerot (1971) explains that use of woman encourages the false perception that despite their diversity women are essentially similar. Further, seen only in relation to men (as Other), woman is easily perceived as the victim of male oppression and nothing more – hence as one–dimensional objects. Thus the stereotype of woman as submissive and passive, as reactive in relation to man's actions, is reinforced. Women who do not fit the stereotype are considered exceptions. Finally, use of "woman" requires that one think in abstractions rather than concrete specifics. This allows for the projection of the author's own experiences – perceptions, ideas, attitudes, feelings and values, without having to acknowledge them. By using woman, deBeauvoir adopted the masculinist perspective which views women as everywhere the same. Judging women from the male half of a sexually segregated world – from the public sphere of male–created ideology and male dominated institutions, she perceived women only as victims. Further, in the process of abstracting about "woman," she unwittingly projected her bias, her identification with the dominant male ideology, onto her study of women. In doing so, she failed to understand women whose lives were different from her own. It seems probable, therefore, that deBeauvoir's adoption of the existential belief that women had the power to choose their lifestyles, stems from a certain elitism – her failure to acknowledge that the alternatives and benefits available to herself were different from those available to most women (or to most men).

deBeauvoir's understanding of women's psychology was also limited by her adoption of the dominant (male) ideology's definition of women as Other. It is true that the perception of woman as Other reflects the official status of women in patriarchal society. Certainly women's position in the world at large has been perceived in terms of its otherness. Simmel (cited by Coser, 1977) claims that in male culture it is the social and psychological destiny of women to be treated and valued as means to the male end. He concludes, "Women, therefore, have a position in a world 'that is full of <u>otherness</u>' " (p. 874). It is important, however, to recognize that although women's formal status is that of Other, women do not necessarily experience their reality as it has been defined externally to them – psychology is not simply a reflection of sociology. It is this assumption, that the dominant ideology and formal structuring of society totally defines

women's psychological reality, that inherently limits deBeauvoir's understanding of women's psychology. Believing that the male-defined reality was the only reality, she assumed that women's psychology was a reflection of that reality. Thus, her view of women's psychological experience was limited to their accommodation to male-defined reality.

It is apparent that an understanding of the psychology of women requires an investigation of two dimensions of their experience: (a) the reality of women's lives and the personal meaning they give to their experience, and (b) the context of their experience including individual circumstances, social forces and ideology. Psychologists have been slow to recognize the importance of both areas. Personality theorists especially have tended to view behavior apart from its context, and rather, have attributed behavior to internal factors, to personality traits. In this way they supported the stereotypes, as deBeauvoir demonstrated. However, deBeauvoir's failure to examine the meaning of their personal experience to women (especially those different from herself), is equally serious. Rather than investigating women's actual experience of their realities, she examined only the formal structures of society and assumed that women's behaviour simply reflects their formal definition and status. Recognizing this as problematic, some historians (Hartman & Banner, 1974; Lerner, 1976; Scott & Tilly, 1975) have recommended that researchers distinguish between women's reality and the many myths that surround them, between their actual situation and their "proper place." That there is a discrepancy between the two is testified to in the following quote:

> A retired farmer from a French village remarked to a visiting anthropologist: "The husband is always the chef d'exploitation . . . well, that's what the law says. What really happens is another matter, but you won't find that registered in the Code Civil" (Scott & Tilly, 1975, p. 21).

It seems logical to conclude that if women's reality is more complex than that defined by the dominant ideology, then women's psychology will be more complex than simply a reaction to their formal definition.

In summary, it is acknowledged that deBeauvoir's concept of woman as the second sex, the Other, was significant in so far as that is how women are portrayed by the dominant ideology, that is their formal status. However, it is held that this is a limited view of women's experience and that the psychology of women is more complex than deBeauvoir understood it to be.

B. Purpose and Organization of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how women experience being women and what this means to them, within the context of their particular social situation, personal history, and cultural ideology. The topic has grown out of my personal life experience and reflections which lead me to think that women may experience a reality different from that defined in the dominant ideology or found in formal social structures. It is expected that the complexity of women's psychology will be uncovered: their experience of a reality apart from that formally defined, expected or imposed, and their perception of themselves as Subject, not just as Other. Further, it is expected that the importance of examining women's psychological experience (ie., the meaning they give to being women) within the context of their lives, will be demonstrated.

This study will consist of the presentation and analysis of case studies developed from intensive, in depth interviews using open-ended questions with 13 women. Because the method of research to be employed is not commonly used and not well understood, Chapter II will present a discussion of the development of scientific research methods, outlining the limitations of the empirical method and explaining the relevance of the phenomenological and critical theory methods employed in this study.

This study regards women as *subjects* rather than objects of research or as objects in relation to men – as participants in the research process. This means that the research material will come from women themselves, they will be actively involved in "telling their own story" – discussing their experiences from their own point of view. This study will attempt to examine women's experience within the context of their personal situations as well as within the broader context of patriarchal culture. Thus, the perspective is feminist. It is expected that the necessity of a feminist perspective in psychological research, in order to develop a psychology of women and to revitalize psychological theory in general, will be demonstrated. Because the meaning and relevance of a feminist perspective is not widely understood, Chapter III will present a discussion of historical and contemporary feminism and of feminist research in the social sciences generally and in psychology specifically.

Chapter IV will explain the research procedure including how the research questions were determined, how subjects were chosen, the interview process and the

process of analysis. Chapter V will include the 13 case studies. Because of problems with binding due to the length of the thesis, Chapter V has been bound separately in a second volume. The reader should feel free either to read the case studies in the order presented (i.e., as Chapter V), to read them after reading the theoretical chapters, or to refer to individual case studies as necessary when reading the theoretical chapters. It is expected that counsellors, researchers interested in the phenomenological method or in the study of language, and persons interested in individual women's various experiences as women will be most interested in the case studies. It should be noted that the case studies are presented as a chapter rather than as an appendix in order to emphasize that the individual participants' contribution in the interviews and their descriptions and interpretations of their experience as women is considered equally valuable as the analyses carried out by the author. Chapter VI will present the analysis of meanings of being a woman, and Chapter VII the analysis of the context of women's experience as women. Chapter VIII will include a discussion of the case studies, the analysis of meanings and the analysis of context of women's experience as women; and Chapter IX will draw conclusions and state implications.

II. Methodology

> We have already seen, however, that one of the things a scientific community acquires with a paradigm is a criterion for choosing problems that, while the paradigm is taken for granted, can be asumed to have solutions. To a great extent these are the only problems that the community will admit as scientific or encourage its members to undertake. Other problems, including many that had previously been standard, are rejected as metaphysical, as the concern of another discipline, or sometimes as just too problematic to be worth the time. A paradigm can, for that matter, even insulate the community from those socially important problems that are not reducible to the puzzle form, because they cannot be stated in terms of the conceptual and instrumental tools the paradigm supplies (Kuhn, 1970, p.37).

A. The Logical Positivist, Empirical Method Criticized

Psychology has its roots in philosophy. Its research originally was concerned with perception and the processes of consciousness and its method was that of self-observation and introspection. Analysis was carried out by means of description and comparison and an attempt was made, with the aid of abstraction, to formulate general laws (Eysenk & Arnold, 1972). One goal of this science, as it developed in the eighteenth century, was to replace the authority of the church with a secular and scientific explanation of human problems. By examining the genesis of social ills and their *causal* inter-relationships, scientists believed they could produce a map of "right action" and "right conduct" according to objective, empirical principles (Becker, 1971). Further, they would be able to *predict* social events and *control* problem situations. Basic to this new philosophy of science was the idea of the unity of science - that there is a unity of scientific laws and a unity of method, hence that the laws of natural science are adequate for understanding human behavior.

Striving to establish itself as an independent and credible field of study able to produce general theories which could be used to predict and control human behavior, psychology adopted this positivist-based, empirical approach of the new science. To meet the standards of empirical science, matters under investigation had to be operationally defined and verified by a neutral observer. The method of self-reflection was considered to be undisciplinary speculation and was banished. Self-observation was replaced with observation by others. Experience could then be tested and

systematized. As a result, subjective experience and the circumstances of individual lives were reified as "facts" in causal relation to other "facts". And because it is individuals and not facts who make connections, the dimension of *meaning* as experienced directly by individuals in their everyday worlds was lost (Eysenk & Arnold, 1972).

Also problematic for the study of meaning are the positivist-based, scientific requirements that problems be solvable according to the rules of analytical logic, and the belief that there are two kinds of knowledge or meaning: cognitive and emotive. Cognitive meaning is considered to be characteristic of scientific discourse, is capable of being true or false, and conveys beliefs; emotive meaning is considered to be characteristic of the discourse of politics, religion, morality and art, and conveys attitudes. Problems that could not be operationalized and investigated according to this logical approach – problems too complex or involving the metaphysical – were considered to be meaningless and labelled "pseudoproblems" (Kaplan, 1968). Thus, the logical truth arrived at by definition usually excluded the world of emotion.

The influence of this philosophy is evidenced especially in the method of psychology – a method which requires an objective and logical approach and which assumes that:

1. theory derives from a rational understanding of related facts that can be reduced to a model or system,
2. matters under investigation must be operationally defined and measured,
3. verification of a theory must be made by a neutral observer, and
4. the resulting knowledge enables scientists to predict and control human behavior, in short, "to *manipulate*[2] the processes of nature" (Eysenk & Arnold, 1972, p.4).

It is this version of science, based in the philosophy of logical positivism or logical empiricism, that has been adopted by the vast majority of psychologists in North America today; this is "established" or mainstream psychology.

What is regarded as "acceptable" research method in psychology is further limited by an attitude that developed in some quarters, that empirical science was capable of solving *all* problems of human existence, a belief that science could

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[2]Eysenk & Arnold's emphasis

guarantee an unlimited *control* of nature, and an assertion that there were *no other* realities than those investigated by the *natural* sciences. This attitude is referred to as "scientism" (Giorgi, 1970). Under scientism, the scientific method (as it was developed in the natural sciences under the empirical paradigm) becomes the *only* acceptable method of inquiry, regardless of the subject matter. This attitude has been keenly felt in most graduate schools of psychology in North America today, and is reflected in the fact that in the vast majority of psychology departments, courses on research methodology assume a logical positivist philosophy and are limited to investigation using traditional empirical methods. (It is this scientistic attitude, in fact, that has made necessary the writing of this chapter on methodology.) Whilst the positivist influence has undoubtedly provided an important emphasis on clarity of ideas and precision of thinking, it has also been effective in limiting our method of inquiry. In the words of Kaplan (1968),

> too much self–consciousness as to methodology may have a repressive effect on the conduct of scientific inquiry. Unintentionally, and even contrary to its own purposes, modern positivism may have contributed to a *myth of methodology*:[3] that it does not much matter what we do if only we do it right (p.394).

The study of the philosophy of science encourages reflection upon the assumptions made by any particular approach to knowledge. It is largely from this discipline that criticism of the established scientific community has arisen. One of the most renowned of these critics is Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn maintains that implicit within any science are paradigms – "universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners" (1970, p. viii). However, while paradigms serve the purpose of defining problems and methods of research, they are problematic in that they also present barriers to knowledge by restricting our thinking and methods of research. Social science research method has been greatly influenced by the once prevailing Newtonian paradigm in the natural sciences. Investigators strived to attain objectivity in method, thereby achieving the status of a "true" science. Since Einstein's elaboration of the Theory of Relativity, the natural sciences have partially disregarded the Newtonian paradigm. The social sciences, however, especially psychology, have continued to follow this paradigm, maintaining that

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[3] Kaplan's emphasis

objective and detached measurement is the most defensible form of knowledge. There appears to be a parallel between religious converts who rigidly adhere to the rules and tenets of their new religion, and psychologists who have adopted the laws of natural science.

Not surprisingly, the empirical approach and its application to the human sciences is being criticized by numerous researchers today. The scientistic claim that it is the *only* legitimate method of intellectual inquiry is being seriously challenged. And its claim to objectivity and neutrality is being criticized as being naive and even dangerous. Giorgi (1970) claims that scientific psychology, in attempting to imitate the practises and aims of natural science, chose a method before it knew its problems; and that the concepts, methods and approaches used are inadequate for a study of human experience. As Roche (1973) states, "Logical empiricism imports into the humanities standards of crystal clarity and criteria of empirical proof and disproof which belong elsewhere" (p.103). In other words, the reductionist method of natural science (everything is reduced to a physics model) has not investigated certain dimensions of human experience because the method itself did not allow for that. Thus the scientific or empirical method is considered by some to be not only limiting but as incapable of exploring many essentially human dimensions. Unfortunately, however, the empirical method too often seems to be the determining factor in our quest for knowledge. Giorgi states, "Too often phenomena are studied more on the basis of the availability of methods than on how the phenomena appear and what they would require (1970, p.83). The scientific establishment tends either to be intolerant of ideas that cannot be researched using the empirical method or may fail to perceive that particular problems exist because these problems do not suit the method. Thus, certain phenomena which cannot be examined by the methods provided by the ruling paradigm, have not been studied.

van Kaam (1966) concludes that exclusive use of the objective method has not only limited our study of human behavior, but has actually distorted our understanding of human experience. He maintains that a human science which restricts itself to only objective and detached measurement will replace, erase and distort human experience and finally become irrelevant to human life. In his words,

> A preconceived empirical, experimental or statistical method may distort rather than disclose a given behavior through an imposition of restricted theoretical constructs on the full meaning and richness of human behavior (p.14).

This is already a problem in psychology. Experimental psychology, in its efforts to be objective, deliberately avoids the matters of subjective meaning, ie., the meaning of behavior to the person behaving or the meaning of action as experienced by the actor. In the process of labelling and categorizing experience, it changes the dynamic life process into static "facts." Thus, in striving to meet the rigorous standards of empirical science, psychologists have come to believe that:

1. subjective meaning is contaminating,
2. the larger human context (social, historical, cultural, political) is virtually impossible to assess scientifically, and
3. the best way to study human beings is to dissect them into essential but observable variables.

Thus, the dimensions of human experience that have been neglected are:

1. subjective *meaning* or the meaning of experience as understood by the person experiencing,
2. the wide and variable *contexts* of human lives, and
3. the *process* of behavior as it occurs over time.

It has been understood for some time that the dimensions of meaning and context were essential to our understanding of human experience. For example, Boring wrote that in the late 1800's, "laboratory atmospheres" were repeatedly found to affect the results of studies, no matter the problem. And certainly the more recent studies by Milgram and by Rosenthal have demonstrated that in order to understand human behavior we must understand its context and the meaning it has for individuals (Sherif, 1979a). Still, the relevance of these dimensions continues to be ignored as experimental psychologists continue to "control" for them. The implications of research methodology neglecting the dynamic aspect of behavior have just recently been understood. Riegel (1978) explains how the empirical approach denies an essential aspect of human experience: that life is an on-going *process* – an ever-changing movement of experience over time. He maintains that in the process of searching for universal conditions of mind and society, mainstream experimental and social psychologists

disregard individual and cultural differences and developmental and historical changes. As a result they study only *static* behavior. Individuals and groups are viewed as if in a "developmental and historical vacuum" (p.23). Of the experts in psychology he vividly writes, "They have nailed the individual right onto the cross, onto the crossing point of developmental and historical time" (p.64).

The assumption of the empirical approach, that science is neutral, is also problematic. Giorgi (1970) brings to our attention the failure of empirical psychology to reflect upon the researcher and the assumptions she/he makes. He maintains that there is no such thing as pure fact: all facts are selected and interpreted by researchers who only grasp certain aspects of reality, depending upon their point of view. Therefore, it is essential not only to note the presence of researchers, but also to know about them – their assumptions, expectations, values, priorities, etc.. As Giorgi states,

> It is not enough merely to note that the researcher is there, but one has to know in what manner he is there, what he expects to find, how he designed the experiment, why he chose the variables he did, etc. (1970, p.97).

Also neglected (or avoided) is the question of the ethical responsibility of social scientists. Rarely do empirical scientists ask: What is the purpose of research? Whom does it serve? To what end? The assumption, kept strictly undercover, is that because the facts are objective and the knowledge neutral, that scientists, too, are neutral and are therefore independent of how knowledge is "used". Schroyer (1970) is concerned that contemporary science and technology have become dangerous in that they represent a new form of legitimating power and privilege. He states,

> In so far as the practise of the scientific establishment is held to be neutral, while actually justifying the extension of repressive control systems, we can assert that the contemporary self–image of science functions as a *technocratic ideology* [4] (p.210).

It appears that the claim of neutrality by mainstream social scientists must be seen as problematic in this sense also. Further, it seems reasonable that a method must be formulated which takes into account the assumptions of the researcher and the purpose of research, and which makes explicit the political ends which it serves. Two research methods that are alternatives to the experimental, empirical approach will now be discussed. These methods are relevant to this study because they allow for the examination of subjective human experience (meaning) and the broader social reality

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[4]Scroyer's emphasis

(context).

B. Meaning and the Experiencing Subject

The study of the subjective dimension of human behavior has its roots in phenomenology – a philosophical method originated by Brentano in 1874 and later revised by his student, Husserl. It was perceived first as a complement and finally as a challenge to logical positivism, which it criticized for being excessively reductionistic and mechanistic. Brentano and Husserl believed that mental phenomena has a distinct existence, as do physical phenomena; and that consciousness is an activity that can be explored and described by the subject, and understood by others because it is intentional. The theory and method of this exploration of subjective experience was further developed by the followers of Husserl: Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Schutz, who came to be known as existential phenomenologists (Roche, 1973).

The phenomenological method involves a philosophical reflecting upon concrete, lived experience – an attempt to use the uniquely human intuitive process to understand human behavior in its immediacy. Phenomenological psychology is defined by van Kaam (1966) as follows:

> Phenomenological psychology, in its broadest definition, is an attempt to return to the immediate meaning and structure of behavior as it actually presents itself. Phenomenology as a method in psychology thus seeks to disclose and elucidate the phenomena of behavior as they manifest themselves in their perceived immediacy (p.15).

Thus, phenomenology is designed to study the essential *human* element, to explore a dimension of reality not researched in the natural sciences and not available to the natural science based, empirical method.

The phenomenological method requires an approach different from the empirical method. Whereas the empirical approach takes concepts, viewpoints and techniques from the natural sciences and applies them to human phenomena; the phenomenological approach goes directly to human phenomena, to the lived, day-to-day world of human subjects. The goal is to *understand*, rather than to explain. Concepts and methods emerge as a necessary result of the study (Giorgi, 1970). The procedure is to first explore the human situation as it is lived and experienced by the subjects, then to

provide a qualitative description of the subjects' experiences and its meaning to them. Thus, the phenomenological method operates at the pre-experimental and pre-theoretical level. Rather than measuring stimuli and responses, it investigates encounters, life-worlds and meanings (van Manen, 1977). Hypotheses and theories are generated as the *end result* of the process. Construct validity is achieved in so far as the internal logic of the subjects' experiences and the meaning they give to these experiences, becomes apparent through their constructions of their life stories and how the past and present and the various aspects of their lives inter-relate. Concurrent validity is achieved if equally sensitive and skilled researchers elicit similar information and make similar analyses. However, reliability is likely not to be achieved, simply because people are assumed to *change* over time- change being part of what it is to be human and alive. In fact, it is expected that the process of the interview itself - the interaction between interviewer and subjects, and the reflection of the subjects upon their own lives - will likely stimulate some degree of change.

Interest in the phenomenological approach to research is growing as academics with a humanist bent become dissatisfied with the limitations of the empirical approach. In education (Apple, 1980; Tabachnick, Popkewitz & Zeichner, 1979-1980) and in organizational management (van Maanen, 1979) we see examples of what is being termed, "qualitative method". According to Argyris (1979), qualitative data involves subjective meaning, has its own implicit logic, and enables us to *understand* complex processes. Unlike quantitative data, it does not measure or sample and, therefore, it is not useful for predicting trends. In sociology and anthropology we hear of "ethnomethodology" (Garfinkel, 1967) or "grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Garfinkel (1967) defines ethnomethodology as "the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent on-going accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life" (p.11). Grounded theory is described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as theory arising from data which is systematically obtained and analyzed, in contrast with theory generated by logical deduction from apriori assumptions.

In psychology we have examples of how theory arises from experience, although these examples come mainly from those who studied and worked in Europe. As is

widely known, Sigmund Freud formulated psychoanalytic theory based on his experiences treating neurotic patients. His theoretical hypotheses were inferred from the findings of his investigations (Richards, 1976). Although he made many assumptions from the logical empiricist position (for example, that the human psyche can be explained by a physics model, that psychic energy is contained in a closed system and that behavior is biologically determined), he nevertheless begins from his experience in formulating theory. Therefore, his method is in this sense, phenomenological. Freud is also considered a phenomenologist because he was concerned with the *meaning* his patients gave to their experience (Eysenk & Arnold, 1972). [5] Like Freud, Jean Piaget used his own observations as the basis for his theory (of cognitive development). His method was to observe children's behavior in their natural environment, and *subsequently* to formulate hypotheses concerning the structure and function of the intellect (Phillips, 1969). While he, too, assumed a model (of cognition) analagous to a natural science model, his method included phenomenological techniques, nonetheless. Viktor Frankl, too, derived theory from experience – his own personal experience as a prisoner of war in a Nazi concentration camp. On the basis of this experience he developed a theory (that striving to find meaning in one's life is the primary motivational source in humans), and a method of treatment which he termed Logotherapy, based on his theory. (Frankl, 1963).

In North America the phenomenological approach is most visible as a clinical method employed by Third Force or humanistic psychologists. For example, client-centered therapy or phenomenological psychology was developed by Carl Rogers, and is both a means of treatment and a means of understanding personality (Meador & Rogers, 1973). Also based on the phenomenological approach are theories on communication and group behavior which focus on process, interactions or patterns of behavior, rather than on a static model (Cathcart and Samover, 1970). As a research method per se, the phenomenological method is not viewed as scientific by the positivist-based mainstream. Giorgi (1970) explains: "the mistaken notion that if one is interested in the whole person then it is not possible to be scientific is still too

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[5] Lerman's (1980) investigation of Freud from a psycho-historical point of view challenges the observational basis of his theory as regards women's sexual development, however. Her findings will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter III.

prevalent" (p.xi). Sherif (1979a) outlines what she describes as "the ideology of psychology's elite" (p.98): that work outside of the laboratory is suspect and that research in naturalistic settings is regarded as necessarily less "pure" even "contaminated".

C. Context and the Experiencing Subject

The study of the context of human behavior is rooted in the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, and the thinking of Horkheimer, Habermas, Adorno and Marcuse. Critical theory began as a reaction to scientism and its resulting technological ideology. The danger of the positivist ideology, according to the Frankfurt theorists, was that it supported an exclusively technical civilization, devoid of any connection between theory and praxis. Further, people were being split into two classes: social engineers – those with knowledge, and inmates of closed institutions – those without knowledge (van Manen, 1977). The knowledge itself was also seen to be problematic. According to Habermas, scientific knowledge had been reduced to a certain kind of knowledge – a one-dimensional, empirical-analyical knowledge. Moral-ethical problems were not considered by the empiricists. Therefore, it was the narrowly defined empirical knowledge that maintained society – maintained the social/political/economic structures and institutions, as well as the ideology. Scientific knowledge was also perceived as limited because it separated social reality into formal, academic disciplines and consequently failed to examine the larger units of human experience. Frankfurt theorists understood the necessity of comprehending total phenomena and believed that one could not hope to conceptualize the whole by "biting off tiny pieces and concentrating on them alone" (Becker, 1971, p.81).

Thus, like Husserl, the Frankfurt theorists were "critical of the positivistic and objectivistic tendencies that were increasingly affecting all intellectual disciplines" (Bernstein, 1976, p.179). However, they were skeptical of Husserl's phenomenology, believing that it fell short in its analysis of the nature of communication. From this point a different emphasis developed. Whereas phenomenology seeks to understand the *meaning* of behavior as intended and experienced by the subject; critical theory examines historical and social structures, and the subsystems of society (*context*),

seeking to discover how individuals are subjected to distorted communication that lies within the structures. Critical theorists hold that because individuals are subjected to distorted communication and may be unconscious of how they are affected by both historical and contemporary structures of society, critical theory is essential to achieving critical consciousness. Marcuse has defined critical thought as follows:

> By criticism we mean that intellectual, and eventually practical effort which is not satisfied to accept the prevailing ideas, actions and social conditions unthinkingly and from mere habit; effort which aims to coordinate the individual sides of social life with each other and with the general ideas and aims of the epoch, to deduce them genetically, to distinguish the appearance from the essence, to examine the foundation of things, in short to really know them (cited by Bernstein, 1976, p.180).

Critical theory, therefore, has a fundamental, practical interest that guides it – a practical interest in improving human existence, in striving for enlightenment and liberation, in achieving personal, social and political change. Thus, its purpose, generally, is to connect theory with praxis; and specifically, is to provide all members of society with a critical consciousness of the ideologies, structures and institutions which are oppressive to individuals and groups. Its aim is to effect change in the social/political structures and institutions by constructing new social theories, implicitly challenging to the dominant social theories and ideologies which maintain the established society (Gouldner, 1970).

The method of critical theory – critical analysis – is to situate human behavior in an historical/cultural/ social context, using philosophic reflection. Critical analysis, therefore, can be understood as a philosophic examination of the structures and subsystems of society (including ideology) which affect individuals. In doing so it crosses the barriers erected by the formal academic disciplines – the disciplines initiated and maintained by the positivists (Becker, 1971). Further, critical analysis provides an explanatory power and a direction for action – a dimension ignored by positivists and not available to phenomenologists.

Most academics have become familiar with critical analysis through the writings of Karl Marx. Marx critiqued the economic, political, social and ideological dimensions of capitalist society and proposed particular strategies for change. How these factors were related to human experience and psychological problems was later investigated by certain European psychotherapists influenced by Marx. Wilhelm Reich, for example,

deplored the separation of psychoanalysis from the practical social and political problems that surround it. He viewed Freud's concept of the oedipus complex not as an historical, biologically-based given, but as a product of the patriarchal family where incest is simultaneously tabooed and encouraged: "the psychic representation of the patriarchal nuclear family" (Mitchell, 1975, p.174). Reich was convinced that the cause of neurotic illness in society was to be found in the social, economic, political and ideological structures of capitalist society. Thus, he looked beyond particular individuals, to the structures of society, for the "causes" of certain behaviors; and he found a solution in social action.

In North America, critical analysis is used extensively in sociology, especially in relation to economic and political theory. In education, too, there is an active force (Holt, Kohl, Friedenberg, Goodman, Illich, Freire) which uses critical analysis as a method of situating education, with its present structure and functions, in the larger contexts of society – of relating education to the economic, political and ideological dimensions that affect it (Rich, 1975). This force is generally considered to be apart from mainstream education theory, however. Feminist theory has also been influenced by a critical theory approach to understanding the situation of women. (More will be said about that in the following chapter.) In psychology, critical analysis, like phenomenology, has been used to a limited extent by clinical practitioners; by those practitioners who have come to believe that political and social systems can be oppressive to individuals and that therapy which attempts to help people adjust to oppressive circumstances perpetuates oppression. Therapy for these practitioners focuses on *change* rather than adjustment. "Radical therapists", for example, believe that therapy involves change – change that takes place not only at the personal level but also at the social and political levels (Agel, 1971). Scientific mainstream psychology, however, continues to discount the context of behavior, by controlling for it, and concentrating instead on behavioral variables that can be operationally defined, measured and tested. Further, in striving to be objective, neutral and pure, mainstream psychology avoids acknowledging the political, and thus inadvertently perpetuates the status quo.

D. A Dialectic Approach: Understanding Meaning and Context

This study will involve both an exploration of meaning as experienced directly by the subjects under investigation, and an analysis of the context in which that meaning is experienced. The method is dialectic in that the relationship between meaning and context will be explored. In other words, meaning and context are perceived as two separate dimensions of understanding which are assumed to interact. The effect of this interaction will become apparent to the investigator in the research participants' responses to the interview questions. Participants will be conscious in various degrees of the interaction of meaning and context in their own lives.

The advantage to examining both meaning and context becomes apparent when we review the shortcomings of those theorists who investigated only one of the two. Sigmund Freud employed a phenomenological approach when he attempted to examine the meaning of people's behavior to them. However, he did not examine context and, therefore, failed to understand that the oedipus complex, which he assumed to be universal, was a product of the nineteenth century, middle-class, patriarchal, nuclear family. Jean Piaget also assumed that the cognitive structure he "discovered" was universal, because he did not recognize the extent to which cognition could vary according to class and culture. On the other hand, critical analysis of context without an examination of subjective experience can also limit understanding. For example, Karl Marx did not examine the dimension of personal experience, believing this to be unimportant in the struggle for liberation. As a result, he failed to account for people's differing values and the meaning they attributed to work. Women's role in production was given the same analysis as was given men's, in spite of women's obviously greater role in reproduction. Further, Marx mistakenly concluded that women's sexuality, being a part of the forbidden personal dimension, was not an important issue in the fight for liberation. This he concluded in spite of the belief of his female comrades, such as Alexandra Kollantai (1972), that women's freedom from sexual oppression was central to their liberation. One might conclude that Marx did not examine the personal dimension (stereotypically perceived as women's sphere), and did not examine the meaning of women's experience to women, because they were not real to him, as a man. William Reich also failed to explore subjective experience – the meaning of people's experience

to themselves. He assumed that repressed sexuality was the basis of all neurosis in capitalist society, and did not understand that many people were suffering from psychological problems related to poverty and poor working conditions.

A few European researchers, however, did examine both meaning and context. Karen Horney (1926 1939,1967) began her criticism of psychoanalytic theory because she found that her patients spoke of problems which Freud's psychoanalysis did not speak to. Being conceptually dissatisfied, she rejected Freud's anatomical–physiological orientation and adopted a sociological orientation, searching amongst life conditions and environmental factors for the source of neurotic conflicts (Horney, 1939). In following this sequence, Horney exemplifies what is being referred to in this study as a dialectic approach. We also see with R.D. Laing (1965) a concern for examining both meaning and context. Laing was critical of the natural sciences and also of psychoanalysis because they both treated people as "objects" of study. He turned to phenomenology as a means to break down the defense barrier between himself (as scientist) and his psychotic patient (the subject of his research). Next he turned to sociology in an effort to establish the original cause of mental illness in the social realm – specifically, in the family structure and relationships of the patient to family members (Mitchell, 1975).

In North America, too, there are examples of theorists who have investigated both the meaning of experience to those who are experiencing, and the social forces which effect the experiencer. Thomas Szasz is widely known for his criticism of Western medical ideology which perceives people in emotional pain to be suffereing from a disease, and labels them as mentally ill. Understanding the subjective experience of patients, he examined the psychiatric structures which label, treat and in effect create mental patients (Szasz, 1961, 1970). Eric Fromm also brought together the meaning and context dimensions. He examined the structure, qualities and potentialities of human experience as well as contemporary social, political and economic problems, producing an analysis of how society has become the product of a dehumanized technology. He explains that it is necessary to look at both dimensions in order that the problems of people in society can be thoroughly understood. However, he also realizes that the process of integrating the various dimensions is unfamiliar to most – that we are, rather, in the habit of compartmentalizing psychology, sociology and politics (Fromm, 1968).

The concern with the methods of phenomenology and critical analysis in this study is not a concern with the methods per se (i.e., in their classical or most popular forms). Rather, the concern is to make clear the *kinds of knowledge* to be gained by using a version of the methods – versions adapted to serve the purpose of this particular investigation. It may be, in fact, that the process of examining both meaning and context of experience and how they inter-relate is a major departure from the methods as they were originally developed. This study is also a departure from "typical" psychological studies because it explores beyond the boundaries of the discipline of psychology (as practised in most North American universities) for clues to understanding. Further, this study is atypical in that it examines a dynamic, on-going process – the interaction of meaning and context and the past and present experience of the subjects. The focus of this thesis, therefore, is in the direction of understanding experience as an ever-changing *process* of interaction as participants are acted upon and act upon their environments over their lifetime.

III. The Feminist Perspective

> At its best, feminist writing fulfills three functions: it is critical of existent social structures and ways to perceive them, it serves as a corrective mechanism by providing an alternative viewpoint and data to substantiate it, and it starts to lay the groundwork for a transformation of social science and society (Eichler, 1980, p.9).

A. Historical and Contemporary Feminism

Throughout history certain women (and sometimes men too) spoke out against the dominant ideology which held women to be inferior. Their point of view was invariably different from that of the dominant male group. Theirs was the point of view of women, conscious of their subordinate status and resulting oppression under patriarchy – a feminist perspective. They challenged traditional ideas and practices in an attempt to broaden society's limited view of women's "nature" and potential, and introduced new ideas as regards social change. It is this *process* of feminism, women's reaction against their subordination under patriarchy, that is constant over time and across cultures. However, it is important to understand that feminism has taken many different forms, depending upon the nature of women's oppression in any given place and time, and upon the nature of change called for by the feminists.

The *content* of feminism, what is reacted to and what specific changes are proposed, varies with time and place according to the particular ideologies and structures of specific cultures and societies. Each feminist reaction is likely to speak to manifestations of sexism within that society. Each feminist proposal for change is an outgrowth of a particular cultural context. Further, within any given society, feminism will vary according to how individual women experience their oppression under patriarchy, and how they choose to take action to effect change. Assumptions as to the "nature" of women and women's potential also change, depending upon the knowledge available and the experiences and consciousness of individual feminists.

An historical view of feminism is essential in order to illustrate the following: feminism is a changing and developing ideology based on women's perspective of their experience under a patriarcal system, feminism challenges traditional thought and practices of patriarchal societies which formally or informally exclude and devalue

women, and the form feminism takes is directly related to the social/political/cultural context from which it evolves.

Contemporary feminism has assumed a variety of forms as it developed in the consciousness and behavior of individual women, and in the Women's Liberation Movement throughout the 1960's and 1970's. Bardwick (1979) defines contemporary feminism as follows: "Feminism is an explicit rejection of the lifestyle created by strongly coercive norms that define and restrict what women are and can do" (p.5). She distinguishes three kinds of present day feminists:

1. *conservative* feminists, essentially content with the status quo but wishing some change in their personal lives, such as redistribution of housework or equal pay for equal work;
2. *reformist* feminists, who wish to retain but modify the institutions of society (educational, legal, religious, etc.); and
3. *radical* feminists, who claim that society needs basic changes in many vital institutions.

Both reformist and radical feminists look beyond personal goals and solutions to rectify women's subordinate position and both are concerned with institutional or cultural sexism (sexism being defined by Bardwick as "the conscious or unconscious assumption that whatever is 'masculine' is intrinsically better than anything 'feminine' " (1979, p.5)).

Of significance in contemporary feminism is its movement from street demonstrations, consciousness-raising groups and popular literature, to the hallowed halls of academia. In the late 1960's and early 1970's in North America, feminist activity centered primarily on the personal growth of individual women who were becoming conscious of their oppression and of the phenomenon of sisterhood, and on women's organizing to expose sexism and discrimination against women and to demand equal opportunity. The movement of feminism into social science research, university courses, professional organizations and academic journals has resulted in further development in feminist thinking. This development involves examination of: the underlying philosophies and assumptions of patriarchy itself - the ideology which creates and maintains the perception of women as Other; the institutions which structure male dominance and female subordination; and the social sciences which is, in many

respects, the study of men, by men, for men.

B. Feminist Research in the Social Sciences

The feminist perspective begins with the following points as givens:

1. that the formal institutions of society are male-dominated and male-oriented,
2. that women hold a secondary status in relation to men,
3. that the dominant ideology reflects and supports the perception of women as subordinate to and less valuable than men, and
4. that women have been discriminated against and oppressed on the basis of sex.

Feminism is a reaction against sexism. Social science, having developed within a patriarchal context, reflects numerous masculinist biases present in the larger society.

That social science research has traditionally treated women as Other is well established (deBeauvoir, 1952; Bernard, 1973a, 1979; Carlson, 1971, 1972; Eichler, 1973, 1977, 1980; Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble & Zellman, 1978; Millman and Kanter, 1975; Sherif, 1979a,1979b; Siveira, 1973; Smith, 1974, 1975, 1977b, 1979a; Thorne and Henley, 1975; Weisstein, 1971). It has focused on problems primarily relevant to males, questioned issues and interpreted findings from a male perspective, and made intellectual judgments according to male-determined values. As a result, traditional social science research has reinforced society's belief that women are, indeed, the Other. From the feminist perspective has grown a new body of research - feminist research. It differs from traditional research in that the patriarchal assumption of women as subordinate is rejected. Rather than perceiving women as Other in relation to men, women are perceived as subject of *their own* story. This necessarily requires that women be perceived as dynamic and interactive subjects rather than as passive or static objects of research. Further, an attempt is made to understand women's experience from women's point of view rather than simply in terms of a male-defined reality or in relation to an assumed male norm. Eichler (1977) defines feminist research as follows:

> I shall here consider such research feminist that regards women as subjects rather than objects; it does not treat men as the norm and women as deviation from the norm. Nor does it legitimize its concern with women in terms of some problems of a "higher order"; instead it reconstructs reality by starting from a female perspective which may or may not need to be

modified as men are taken into consideration. (p.410)

Inherent to feminist research is a criticism of traditional male-biased theory and, as well, the presentation of an alternative female perspective. New purposes and criteria have to be established. Many traditional theories may be rejected or reinterpreted. Methodology must be examined and new approaches investigated. The new perspective challenges the status quo and offers alternatives. In doing so it is making conscious the ideas and practices which create and maintain the perception of women as "Other".

Feminist research has already exerted a direct influence on contemporary social science. Feminist researchers have demonstrated that traditional anthropological research focused excessively on male activities, often excluding women altogether, and consistently viewed men as more advanced than women, crediting men as being the "creators and carriers" of culture (Rosaldo, 1974). Women's physiological involvement in child-bearing and the relationship of their social roles to bodily functions led to the association of women with nature (Ortner, 1974). The consistent valuing of males over females was justified on the bases that women's biologically-based "uncivilized" behavior was interpreted to be less sophisticated than men's achievements in social institutions. Further, women's secondary status was accepted as one of the "true universals" in the eyes of nineteenth century scholars (Darwin, Bachofen, Morgan, Engels), who mistook the myth of matriarchy for history and assumed that matriarchy gave way to patriarchy because women were inferior to men. In addition, these nineteenth century ethnographers imposed upon their observations Victorian attitudes and values which held that nature and the sexuality of women must be subordinated to the superior reason and will of men (Bamberger, 1974; Ortner, 1974; Rosaldo, 1974).

It is evident that traditional male anthropologists, although they claimed to observe cultures in a neutral and objective manner, were extremely ethnocentric. They imposed their own structures, values and interpretations on what they saw, and consistently attributed greater worth to men's activities. Assumptions were made about women's "proper place" and women were not studied directly. As a result of feminist inquiry, the validity of much traditional anthropology is now questioned in a more systematic and comprehensive manner than ever before. The deficiency of traditional anthropological studies which have typically failed to consider women's perspective has been

demonstrated. The problems are both analytical and technical, according to Edwin Ardener (1975). He explains:

> The fact that no one could come back from an ethnographic study of "the X", having talked only *to* women, and *about*[6] men, without professional comment and some self-doubt. The reverse can and does happen constantly. . . . Indeed the astounding deficiency of a method, supposedly objective, is starkly revealed; the failure to include half the people in the total analysis. (pp.3-4)

Some feminist historians are criticizing traditional history for its inadequate treatment of women, its failure to understand women's situation and its consistent focusing on the activities of men. Kelly-Gadol (1976) explains,

> Traditional history lacks an understanding of women's situation because it has considered civilization to be making war, wealth, laws, government, art, and science, all activities that women have been largely excluded from (p.810).

This has resulted in a major distortion of historical theory and knowledge (Kelly-Gadol, 1976; Lerner, 1976a, 1976b, 1977; Smith-Rosenberg, 1975). Gordon, Buble & Dye (1976) attribute traditional historians' neglect of women to their male-orientation as to what is historically significant, explaining that:

> Their categories and periodization have been masculine by definition, for they have defined significance primarily by power, influence and visible activity in the world of political and economic affairs. (p.175)

The feminist perspective in history has brought about a major breakthrough in academic analysis of women's history. Women have finally come to be recognized as a distinct group whose study can contribute to a new appreciation of the history of all of humankind. As Kelly-Gadol (1976) states, "We have made of sex a category as fundamental to our analysis of the social order as other categories such as class and race" (p.816). Women's history has shaken the conceptual foundations of historical study by making problematic three of the basic concerns of historical thought: periodization, categories of social analysis, and theories of social change. For example, Kelly-Gadol (1977) has revolutionized historical periodization by demonstrating that

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[6]Ardener's emphasis

during the Renaissance (a period formerly understood to be liberating for men and assumed also to be liberating for women), women's options were generally reduced by the creation of new forms of political and social organization. She concludes that "events that further the historical development of men, liberating them from natural, social or ideological constraints, have quite different, even opposite effects on women" (p.139). Thus, a feminist perspective has revitalized historical thought in general, creating a new history as well as a new history of women.

In traditional sociology, women's experience has been largely ignored. Perceiving women as belonging to the domestic sphere, as apart from the highly valued formal structures and institutions of the public sphere, sociologists generally excluded women from direct study. Therefore, most of what is known as the study of society, is the male study of male society (Bernard, 1973a). Most definitions in sociology were based on male experience. For example, *work* was defined as what men do, therefore, what women did was not considered work, therefore, women were not studied.[7] Economically, women were marginal (the Other), to be called upon when needed. Similarly, political action was defined in terms of how men were involved in the political process. Traditional sociologists assumed that women "for some reason" did not get politically involved. The presence of women was acknowledged, but usually in terms of their lack of involvement. They remained undifferentiated – the background against which men's activities could be viewed. According to Lofland (1975), women are perceived as "simply there", essential to the set but largely irrelevant to the action. Glazer and Waehrer (1977) refer to the "invisibility" of women in the *man-made* world and in science. Similarly, Kanter (1975) explains that women's invisibility and low status results from their being part of the "unexamined infrastructure". Daniels (1975) concludes that in sociology more than in any other discipline, sexist thought predominates; that the very discipline of sociology is based on a male perspective of society and the assumption that the public sphere and what men do is more important than the domestic sphere and what women do. She explains:

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[7] Similarly, women are not paid for the work they do in the home, because by definition they do not work there.

> The inattention to women derives from understandings about social science commitments to "important" topics. Male scientists assign priorities for study and then assume that the picture of lives, events, and relationships presented are of universal importance. Therefore, they are collecting data in a neutral fashion. . . . Those experiences that make women different from men and that might provide them with unique or unusual approaches to the problems presented within this enterprise are excluded from attention. (p.346)

Exposing the male bias in traditional sociology has been an exceptionally difficult task. Eichler (1982) explains that sexist bias in sociological research falls into five broad categories: language is sexist, concepts are sexist in their origin and meaning, research is androcentric in so far as women are ignored or viewed from a male perspective research methodology and instruments are biased against women, and interpretation of research results reflects sexist attitudes. Having exposed these limitations, feminist sociologists have gone on to challenge concepts, theories and methods, and to propose alternatives which alter our knowledge and understanding. It has been established, for example, that as with the concepts of work and political activity, other concepts such as career, status, power, and alienation have been defined according to male experience. As well, the feminist perspective has demonstrated that social stratification theory is based on the unequal relationship of men and women – that it assumes women's subordination to men (Acker, 1973; Eichler, 1973). Also, there is growing recognition that women's so-called marginal position (because they are relegated to a devalued domestic sphere) is not marginal at all. Rather, the work of men in the public sphere is directly and indirectly dependent on the work of women in both public and domestic spheres. Further, there is a new realization that in order to understand women's situation in society, the *complexity* of their experience must be investigated. Juliet Mitchell (1977), for example, rejects "the idea that women's condition can be deduced derivatively from the economy or equated symbolically with society" (p. 172). She suggests, rather, that women will be better understood when their lives are examined in terms of four specific structures: production, reproduction, socialization and sexuality. Lerner (1976) explains that women's status results from their functioning in several areas: economic, political/legal, family, etc.. In addition, she discusses the importance of taking into account the psychological dimensions and the effect on women's consciousness of having their status determined by men.

It is evident that an extensive revamping of sociology must take place in order that the interests and experiences of women be properly included. Smith (1974, 1975, 1977b, 1979a) has made clear how male-controlled institutions serve to create and maintain an ideology which portrays women as Other. Examining sociology from the perspective of women, she explains that if feminists use the language, theories and methods of traditional sociology, they limit understanding of women's experience because women's place in sociology is generally subordinate or invisible. Further, Smith claims that by adopting traditional research perspectives and priorities, women are alienated from their own personal experience. She suggests, therefore, that in determining the focus of their studies, feminists begin from women's *lived experience.* In her words:

> we must begin with a knowledge of women's everyday worlds and of their experience. This means, in the first place, learning from them. Much of our work in the field now begins from the framework, concepts, and perhaps even more importantly, the organization of the subject matter that sets up description as an objective account. . . . The experience we must begin from, however, is that of those who live it rather than those who merely observe for the purpose of entering into the sociological discourse. I am suggesting that the world within the experience of actual individuals should become the place where inquiry begins. (Smith, 1977b, p.23)

In addition to providing feminists with an understanding of male dominance in ideology and of the necessity of beginning with the experience of women, Smith also provides a model of critical analysis. In her writings she places behavior in a social/political/historical context, demonstrating the importance of external factors that impinge upon and alter women's consciousness. Smith's work is, therefore, a major theoretical advance which has significant implications for the analysis of the experience of women in society.

It is apparent that traditional theory and method in the social sciences is being similarly criticized by feminists in various academic disciplines. It is also evident that the artificial division of women's experience into various academic categories impedes our understanding the total picture of women. Therefore, feminists must acknowledge and integrate the theories of feminists from disciplines other than their own.

As regards this study, specifically, I have attempted just such an approach. Lerner's (1976a) advice to researchers to distinguish between ideas held by the society

about "women's proper place" and their actual situation, and Hartman and Banner's (1974) recommendation that historians distinguish between ideology and reality, have been applied directly to this study. Shirley Ardener's (1975b) and Okely's (1975) anthropological evidence (discussed later) that women experience a separate reality, formally undefined and unrecognized by males, has reinforced my "hunch" that women's psychological reality is more than that of Other. Smith's (1977b, 1979a) advice to begin with the experience of women in their everyday worlds, and her modelling of a critical method of analysis which places behavior into a context, have influenced my choice of method.

Let us now examine contemporary psychology in order to assess some implications of the feminist approach. That the criticisms and proposed alternatives parallel those from other disciplines will become obvious as we progress.

C. The Feminist Perspective in Psychology

It is held by feminists that in psychology, (as in other social sciences), a masculinist perspective predominates. That a bias toward males existed in psychology, was initially demonstrated by Carlson and Carlson (1960) whose analysis of personality research demonstrated: an imbalance of sampling in research – "males are selected far more often than females as research subjects" (p.482), a paucity of tests for sex differnces, and the inadequacy of reporting the sex composition of research samples. In 1971 and 1972 Carlson demonstrated that personality research continued to focus on males and failed to test for sex differences. Another ten years have passed and we see changes: there has been a great increase in the number of psychological studies on women, carried out largely by feminists. While psychologists appear to have become more aware of the need to include females in their research samples, they do not necessarily understand either the importance or the limitations of sex differences, however. On the one hand we still see research which fails to report (let alone try to account for) sex differences. On the other hand we have a burgeoning new field of study on sex differences, which continues to debate the relevance of miniscual differences in females and males, which often confuses sex and gender differences, which typically ignores that average differences between females and males are lesser

than variations found within each sex, and which consequently dismisses the vast area of similarities of the sexes – similarities which seem to reflect our common humanness.

While the male bias in psychology is reflected in the minimal representation from female subjects, the problem is complicated by the fact that concepts and theories are based on data gathered on male subjects *only*. Male behavior has been considered the norm – the model for what is human. Silveira (1973) maintains that when behavior of female subjects does not fit the male norm, it is commonly written off as error. When female subjects are excluded, or the "deviant" data from female subjects is ignored, the theory based on data gathered from male subjects may be biased and oversimplified. For example, when McClelland began his studies of achievement motivation he dispensed with female subjects because they did not fit his model. [8] His theory was later demonstrated to be both biased and simplistic (Horner, 1971, 1972). Horner introduced another motive that seemed to be present in women – the "fear of success." [9] As another example, the career development of women was for a long time ignored, because, not fitting the male model, women were seen to "complicate" the research. The theory of career development was not considered limited, however, until feminists demonstrated its inadequacy as regards women's career development. In both examples, males were considered the norm, and females "deviant" from the male norm.

The psychology of women has also been distorted when concepts based on data derived from males are unsuccessfully applied to females. One example is Freud's application of the Oedipus complex, originating from his study of male development, to females. Though he encountered much difficulty making the concept "fit" females, he nevertheless concluded that the female superego was less developed than the male superego (Klein, 1971). Lerman (1980) has exposed new information regarding Freud's development of the Oedipal theory as applied to females. Examining the 24 volumes of the Standard Edition of Freud's works plus the volumes of his letters to various persons and the autobiographies of his disciples, she has ascertained that Freud originally

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[8] Alper (1974) describes that McClelland's first text, The Achievement Motive (1953), devoted only eight of its nearly 400 pages to studies of women.

[9] Horner's theory, though eventually criticized for perpetuating a trait theory of personality, remains significant as a starting point in the study of motivation in women. From this beginning has developed a more comprehensive and complex understanding of women and motivation – theory which takes into account women's values and the social forces which effect them (Sherif, 1979b).

theorized that female neurosis resulted from sexual seduction and trauma in childhood, fathers frequently being the perpetrators. Freud wrote to his intimate friend, Wilhelm Fliess, that he felt uncomfortable with this concept, however, troubled as he was with his own sister's neurosis and the probability of his father's involvement. Also, Freud was disturbed by a dream, he reported to Fliess, in which he himself experienced "overaffectionate" feelings toward one of his daughters. This he interpreted to mean he was uncomfortable with the trauma concept of female neurosis. He shifted to the Oedipal theory, thus solving his discomfort about his father and himself. Examining Freud's theories of neurosis in their final form, Lerman observes that whereas the mother is seen to be the seducer of the son, it is the daughter who is considered the potential seducer of the father. Proceding from this theory, Freud no longer continued to believe his female patients when they complained of parental seduction. Thus concludes Lerman, "The result was that psychoanalytic theory, which had started from an observational base, lost its connection to that base" (1980, p. 113).

Another example of concepts derived from male experience being unsuccessfully applied to females is Kohlberg's theory of moral development. As is frequently the case in social science research, Kohlberg tested only male subjects but generalized his results to females as well. Then, speculating on the moral development of the "average" North American, he placed females at a "less developed" level than males (Gilligan, 1977).[10] However, Freud admitted that he did not understand women and that he was dissatisfied with the conventional terms used to explain the nature of women.

> That is all I have to say to you about femininity. It is certainly incomplete and fragmentary and does not always sound friendly. . . . If you want to know more about femininity, inquire from your own experiences in life, or turn to the poets, or wait until science can give you deeper and more coherent information. (Freud, cited by Mitchell, 1974, p.119).

Kohlberg, on the other hand, gave no indication that he failed to research or understand women's moral development, despite the fact that his data were based exclusively on male behavior.

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[10] Kohlberg placed the "average" male at level four on his scale of moral development (authority maintains morality) and the "average" female at level three on his scale ("good-boy" morality of maintaining good relations and the approval of others).

Erik Erikson differentiated female and male identity on the basis of the traits he associated to their genital organs, describing women as inner-directed and men as outer-directed. From this basis he defined femininity as passive and masculinity as active, and theorized that: women are passive and men are active, women's identity is based primarily on their need to "fill their inner space" (have children), and women are necessarily dependent on men because men achieve an identity based on what they do, whereas women achieve an identity based on their relationship to men. Thus, Erikson assumed a male model of humanity and perceived women as an *exception to the male norm*. Further, like the traditional anthropologists, he assumed civilization to be a masculine derivative. That Erikson failed to explore beyond lay stereotypes of female and male behavior; that his theory is based on individual interpretation which reflects cultural bias, more than on scientific investigation; and that his theory of female development is inadequate is considered by many feminists to be self-evident (Bardwick & Douvan, 1971; Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Gilligan, 1977; Millet, 1969; Rossi, 1972; Spricer, 1979; Weisstein, 1971). In the words of Weisstein,

> These views from men who are assumed to be experts reflect, in a surprisingly transparent way, the cultural consensus. They not only assert that a woman is defined by her ability to attract men, they see no alternative definitions. They think that the definition of a woman in terms of a man is the way it should be. (p.69)

Psychological theories that simply reflect cultural attitudes and values are problematic in that they do not further our understanding. They are problematic, too, because they reinforce inaccurate stereotypes and support a perception of women as subordinate. The *description* of the images and roles becomes a *prescription* for behavior. How psychologists and other "experts" described and then prescribed acceptable behavior for women, is documented by Ehrenreich and English in For Her Own Good (1978) and by Bernard in The Future of Motherhood (1974). That psychologists attribute different values to supposed masculine and feminine traits, in keeping with society's higher valuation of males is also evident. In a study of male bias in psychotherapeutic practice, Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz & Vogel (1970) demonstrated that many clinicians have a double standard of mental health. The clinicians (both female and male) not only described healthy women and men in different

terms which parallel the sex stereotypes, but also described a healthy man as similar to a healthy adult and a healthy woman as different from a healthy adult. About these results, Silveira (1973) concludes, "Again, male is equated with human and healthy, female is not" (p.102)

Frieze et al. (1978) explain that in addition to distorting psychological theory by using only male subjects or by unsuccessfully applying concepts derived from male subjects to females, traditional researchers have contaminated theory by using tests oriented to males, using tests which bias findings, or employing testing situations which are male-oriented. For example, traditional tests of masculinity and femininity have treated these traits as absolute and exclusive rather than as overlapping - as dichotomous rather than as integrated. Frieze et al. also claim that the failure to report findings which show no sex differences has also distorted psychological theory. There may exist a great body of research which demonstrates no difference between the sexes, but because these findings are "not significant", the results have not been published. Maccoby and Jacklin, known for their book, The Psychology of Sex Differences (1974), made the same point. Recognizing the importance of this criticism, the Canadian Psychological Association has recommended in a position paper, Science Free of Sexism (Stark-Adamec & Kimball, 1982), that researchers consider the relevance of lack of sex difference as well as sex difference. They state:

> If the lack of a sex difference makes an important theoretical point or correction to the literature, then the study takes on a new importance. It is particularly important to include analyses where sex differences were not found as well as where they were found, as this helps correct the bias against not reporting nonsignificant results (p. 12).

That psychologists have reflected a male bias is richly demonstrated by contemporary research on language. According to Thorne & Henley (1975) the concept of male as the norm, as universal, is evidenced in the use of the generic "he" in the English language, to mean both male and female. Studies show, however, that in most cases, females are actually being excluded. For example, in a study by Schneider and Hacker (1973), female and male students were asked to bring illustrations for a fictitious sociology text, the table of contents of which included chapters on "Urban Man", "Industrial Man", "Family", etc.. Results showed that a majority of both female and male students failed to see "man" as generic - as referring consistently to both sexes. A

second example: Graham (1975) studied pronoun citations in children's schoolbooks and found that only 32 out of 940 citations for "he," actually referred to the unspecified singular subject. She concluded, "the reason most of the pronouns in schoolbooks were male in gender was because most of the subjects being written about were men and boys" (p.58). Graham also discovered that in books read by school children there are seven times as many men as women and over twice as many boys as girls. Further, she learned despite the preponderance of the words "man" and "boy", the words "wife" and "mother" are used more than "husband" and "father." Clearly, males are seen more often as subjects of stories, and females, when included, are more likely to be seen in relation to men (as Other).

Further studies suggest that use of the generic "he" and "mankind," plus use of words such as "chairman" and "mothering" which segregate males and females and indicate their "proper places," together with sexist values which lend positive connotations to words associated with men (bachelor) and negative connotations to words associated with women (spinster), supports male dominance and female submission (Schultz, 1975). It appears reasonable to conclude, in light of this research, that, "Language helps enact and transmit every type of inequality, including that between the sexes; it is part of the 'micropolitical structure' that helps maintain the larger political–economic structure" (Thorne & Henley, 1975, p.15). As regards feminist research, another difficulty with language emerges. The task of conducting nonsexist research is complicated by the fact that the English language is sexist, and finding neutral or nonsexist words to express nonsexist ideas is difficult (Strainchamps, 1971). Smith (1979b) discusses how use of language which oppresses women interferes with our understanding of women's experience.

The feminist perspective offers much more than a critique of traditional mainstream psychology. It challenges traditional theory and methods by its presentation of data which old theories do not cover, by creating alternate theories and by demonstrating the relevance of alternate methods. Parlee (1975) sees the contribution of feminist psychologists taking three major directions: pointing out "new" phenomena, reinterpreting traditional notions and/or bodies of data, and showing the applicability of established psychological theories to a "new" realm of data.

The early feminist research seems to have centered around the presentation of "new" data. A classic example is Goldberg's (1968) finding that women are prejudiced against women, based on his study which demonstrated that women devalue women's work, even in traditional female fields. Also classic is the Broverman et al. (1970) study which demonstrated a dual standard of mental health for men and women, on the part of clinicians (referred to earlier). The discovery of "new" phenomena such as these is an implicit challenge to traditional psychology in that there were no conceptual frameworks to account for the "new" data presented.

Feminist research is revitalizing psychology by presenting a more comprehensive perspective on women's experience and behavior which necessitates a reinterpretation of existing theories and concepts. Horner's (1972) exploration of how *women* respond in an achievement motivation task instigated a re-examination and reformulation of McClelland's work. Bem's (1974, 1975) work on androgyny began an investigation of the traditional concepts of femininity and masculinity, resulting in an examination of previously unquestioned assumptions in personality theory. For example, equating female and male with feminine and masculine was questioned, and the notion that "gender" (which involves social and cultural expectations) is a more appropriate concept than "sex" for studying particular issues was developed (Unger, 1979, 1980). Another instance of feminist research forcing a reinterpretation of existing theory, is Gilligan's (1977, 1979) work, which demonstrates the inadequacy of Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Gilligan studied the process women go through in making a moral decision, and the values they entertain at each step in the process. Gilligan's model of female moral development (which is based on a phenomenological approach) differs significantly from Kohlberg's model which was based on the responses of male subjects only (and used an empirical approach).

A third category of studies by feminist psychologists consists of investigations which use established theory in such a way as to bring to light "new" realms of data previously ignored or overlooked. One example is Tennov's (1973) demonstration that women and men are more likely to be reinforced, although in different ways, for behaviors "appropriate" to the traditional roles for their sex than for "inappropriate" behaviors. Another example is Henley's (1975) work on sex differences in nonverbal

communication, which brings together conceptual frameworks and bodies of research from sociolinguistics, ethnology, nonverbal communication, and social-psychology. Henley's research has demonstrated the importance of nonverbal cues in the maintenance of the social structure and of power relationships, and their importance in restricting women to "their proper place".

D. The Feminist Perspective and Methodology

Feminists are questioning the prevailing assumption that social science is neutral and objective. Further, some feminists perceive a link between different ways of knowing (i.e., methods of gaining insight) and the male and female stereotypes and their differing valuations. Carlson (1972) associated the prestige associated with "hard data" to the prestige generally conferred upon men in society. Bernard (1973a) attributes the focus on empirical research, with its inherent attention to mastery and control, separation, manipulation, and power relationships[11], to the masculine principle and a male preoccupation, calling it the "machismo element in research" (p.23). Similarly, Millman & Kanter (1975) attribute the objective, controlled approach to establish "neutral facts", to a *masculine* ideal. They state,

> The more conventional quantitative approaches, which deal with variables rather than persons. . . may be associated with an unpleasantly exaggerated masculine style of control and manipulation (p.xvi).

In other words, the empirical method, with its claim to objectivity, its focus on variables rather than persons, and its preference for quantitative information – "hard data", (as opposed to qualitative, in-depth analysis which investigates personal meaning and feelings – "soft data"), parallels a masculine stereotype: rational, intellectual, unemotional, distant, and powerful. Further, the valuing of empirical methods and hard data as superior to the softer types, parallels society's valuing of the masculine. Just as the spheres of public and domestic, and the traits of masculine and feminine have been associated with male and female and valued accordingly, so the methods of research which result in quantitative (hard) or qualitative (soft) data are associated with male and female, and valued accordingly.

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[11]A power relationship is perceived in the sense that the researcher has knowledge which is purposely kept from the subjects.

The association of the dominant scientific method with the dominant male stereotype is not limited to feminists or to present day thinking. Before contemporary feminists equated a neutral, objective science with masculine behavior and values, Simmel (cited by Coser, 1977) associated the ideas of standard values, neutral knowledge, and objective science with the dominant male. He explains:

> We measure the achievements and commitments. . . of males and females in terms of specific norms and values; but these norms are not neutral, standing above the contrasts of the sexes; they have themselves a male character. . . . The standards of art and demands of patriotism, the general mores and the specific social ideas, the equity of practical judgments and the objectivity of theoretical knowledge, . . . – all these categories are formally generically human, but are in fact masculine in terms of their actual historical formation. If we call ideas that claim absolute validity objectivity binding, then it is a fact that in the historical life of our species there operates the equation: objectivity = male. (p.872)

Vaughter (1976) insists that it is imperative that feminists analyze methodology as well as models of science, because the feminist perspective requires that the research enterprise itself be put into a social and political context. Development of the inter–disciplinary and cross–disciplinary approaches in feminist research may engender recognition of the limited nature of the empirical approach for the proper study of women, and of humankind.

The empiricist notion that objective observers can remain detached from the subject matter being researched is challenged by feminists. Lofland (1975) claims that observers not only selectively perceive but also impose upon interpretations, their attitudes, beliefs and values. She believes that male observers not only selectively perceive but also impose upon interpretations, their attitudes, beliefs and values. Further, male observers who are unable to empathize with their female subjects are likely to interpret and judge women's behavior from their own perspective. A similar phenomenon may occur with male therapists and their female clients. As a therapist, the author has heard numerous stories from female clients about how their former male therapists failed to understand their concerns and gave them advice which served to benefit males. For example, one client described how a male psychiatrist advised her to have surgery for breast enlargement because her husband complained that her breasts were too small. Leidig (1980) related instances of male therapists getting an erection as

they listen to accounts of the experiences of retrospective incest victims. She concludes that in cases of retrospective incest, males should not be permitted to counsel females. Recognizing the danger to women of their being counselled by male therapists who do not understand their point-of-view, the Canadian Psychological Association approved and adopted guidelines, Guidelines for Therapy and Counselling with Women, prepared by Pettifor, Larsen & Cammaert (1980).

Placing the male researcher/female subject within the context of patriarchal society makes clear another aspect of the problem - the problem of female subjects withholding information from male researchers. Miller (1976) attributes the failure of male researchers to elicit complete responses from female subjects to the power relationship which exists between the sexes. She maintains that women who are in a subordinate position to men are unlikely to reveal themselves to men because men are considered their superiors. She states, "Put simply, subordinates won't tell" (p.10). Some anthropological studies give support to this analysis. Shirley Ardener (1975b) discovered in her study of the Bakweri of Cameroon, that in the presence of men, women agree with men's interpretations of their behavior, but that in a group of women only, they tell a very different story. For example, Bakweri men interpret the spirit rites (participated in by both women and men) as curing a girl from an attack by a spirit. When asked about this in front of men, women nod their heads in agreement. However, when the subject is raised in the absence of men, Bakweri women excitedly explain that the rites are a means to initiating a girl into the language and beliefs of the spirits, and symbolize her acceptance by the women as one of them. Okely (1975) observed a similar phenomenon among Gypsy women. Within the Gypsy culture, women are seen as subordinate to men, as polluting and as under the strict control of the Gypsy band. It is the Gypsy women who, in order to protect the Gypsy men, must make contact with Gorgios (non-Gypsies), who are also seen as polluting. However, when the Gypsy women are away from the laws of the Gypsy culture they consider themselves free to be sexually aggressive with Gorgio men and to enjoy themselves while they exploit these men financially. Gypsy men recognize only the financial exploitation of the Gypsy women's behavior. Gypsy women acknowledge only this aspect when in the presence of Gypsy men. With women, however, they joke and laugh about their sexual

adventures. Ardener (1975a) maintains that this alternate view of reality can be observed in almost all nonverbalized activities and behavior, as well as in verbalizations and rituals. In light of this psychological and anthropological evidence, therefore, Lofland's (1975) following conclusion seems reasonable.

> To the degree that males and females. . . define each other *as other* and to the degree that the definition results in physical and psychological segregation, male researchers will be limited in their *access*[12] to women's places and women's minds (and vice versa). (p. 159)

According to Weisstein (1971) the failure of male psychologists to understand female dynamics is compounded by their search for inner traits which agree with the stereotypes, and their failure to examine social context. Reviewing Erikson's theory and the Rosenthal and Milgram studies, amongst others, she concludes,

> It is obvious that a study of human behavior requires first and foremost, a study of the social contexts within which people move, the expectations as to how they will behave, and the authority which tells them who they are and what they are supposed to do. (p.77)

Feminist research in psychology which has attempted to examine the context of women's experience has necessarily been interdisciplinary. Bloch (1978) gained new insights from the integration of psychology with history. She demonstrated that historically (sixteenth to nineteenth centuries), women's psychology has alternately been described as quantitatively different (less rational, less or more moral) from men, or as qualitatively different (nurturing, emotional and passive) from men (who were believed to be aggressive, intellectual and active), but at all times as inferior to men, reflecting the social and religious attitudes of the times. As another example, Laidlaw (1978) integrated psychology, drama and history, demonstrating that contrary to the popular notion that psychology involved an objective and scientific understanding of women, it merely reflected the prevailing attitudes of society toward women at a given time. Foreman (1977) merged the boundaries of sociology and psychology in her book, Femininity as Alienation, by critiquing both the works of Freud and Marx as regards women. A monumental work is Ruether's (1975) New Woman/New Earth, which outlines the

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[12] Lofland's emphasis

historical development of sexist ideologies and their relationship to philosophy, religion, psychology, social movements, political movements, and finally to ecology. Ruether explains how sexist ideology is prevalent in all aspects of life – in everyday reality and in the formal institutions and organizations of society. These inter-disciplinary feminist works are important not only because they provide a feminist perspective of female experience, thus countering old stereotypes, but also because they have achieved a new depth of understanding of the female perspective.

E. Relevance of the Feminist Perspective

Thus far I have attempted to document the extent to which feminist research is influencing the social sciences in general, and psychology in particular. The feminist perspective is essential to psychology in order that issues pertaining specifically to women be investigated, and the lack of research on women generally be countered. In these ways new data will be generated which will create a new view of womankind and a broader view of humankind – a psychology of *human* behavior. A feminist perspective can help correct distortions in knowledge which derive from inappropriate consideration of the category of sex. Given the fact that our culture is patriarchal and that the social sciences are dominated by the male perspective and masculine values, the feminist perspective can offset these distortions and develop theory which takes into account women's experience from women's point of view. Bernard (1979) believes that the feminist perspective is in the process of producing a paradigm shift. The challenge is now sufficiently established that some researchers find the old paradigm inadequate. However, feminists remain an outgroup. The establishment (i.e., those with hiring power, those in charge of publications, etc.) is still by-and-large concerned with keeping them out. According to Bernard (1979), the challenge of mainstream social science by feminists is a slow and arduous task. She states, "Not everyone accepts the new paradigm. Only when the old generation dies does the new paradigm take over completely" (p.xvii).

F. Summary

The feminist perspective is not new. Throughout history certain women, aware of their subordinate position and oppression under patriarchy, and interested in living their lives differently from that prescribed for them by their culture, challenged traditional authority. They also proposed changes. The particular forms feminism took depended upon the social/political/cultural context in which individual feminists lived. However, its process remains essentially the same.

Contemporary feminism was reborn in the 1960's with the Women's Liberation Movement. Its entrance into the social sciences has resulted in a questioning of the philosophical assumptions about the nature, potential and "place" of women, inherent to a patriarchal system. A result of feminist research is that a definite bias toward males and against females has been exposed. This bias has taken many forms, from exclusion of females as subjects, to focusing on problems relevant primarily to males, asking questions and interpreting findings from a predominantly male perspective, making intellectual judgments according to masculine values, and unsuccessfully applying to females, insights derived from male experience. In other words, in traditional social science, women have been treated as Other.

Feminist research not only challenges traditional theories and concepts, but proposes alternatives. It also challenges traditional methodology, and demonstrates the relevance of alternative methods for the study of women (and men). It is evident that an *inter-disciplinary* feminist approach to the study of women is advantageous because the inter-disciplinary perspective enables researchers to grasp the complexity of women's situation. Further, it demonstrates the need to understand women's behavior in context and to explore the meaning to women of their experience. The goal of feminist research is to explore, from women's point of view, the experience of women, and correct errors of omission and distortion present in theory and research. It is assumed that feminist research will result in a more balanced understanding of *human* experience. It is further assumed that in time, the necessity for all research to be nonsexist in order to be good research, will be widely understood. Therefore, the feminist perspective is a potentially revolutionary force, and is considered by feminists to be essential to the revitalization of traditional male-dominated social science

IV. Research Procedure

A. The Participants

Thirteen women were interviewed in this study. Women who were willing to participate were located through contacts in Edmonton and Northern and Central Alberta communities where I have worked and established credibility. The women were selected for their various differences (as regards age, education, work experience, marital status, place of residence, etc.), not as representatives of women generally. All were residents of Alberta but only seven were Alberta born. Two women were born in other Canadian provinces, two in the United States, and one in Czechoslovakia. At the time of the interview, eight women lived in a large urban city, three lived on farms (two in Northern Alberta and one in Central Alberta), one lived in a Northern Alberta village and one lived in a small Central Alberta city. They come from various ethnic backgrounds (Ukrainian, French, Metis, Hispanic, Italian, Norwegian, Czechoslovakian, Hungarian, Irish, English, Scottish and Swedish) and described their religious affiliations as Roman Catholic (four), protestant (three), lapsed protestant (three), lapsed Roman Catholic (one), Christian (one) and unaffiliated (one). Ages of the women ranged from 23 to 69, and the median age was 36. The number of women in their 30s (six) was not planned, but due to unforseen circumstances: three older women originally scheduled for interviewing could not participate due to health and family problems, and younger women took their places. Levels of formal education ranged from grade eight to a graduate university degree. All of the women had worked at paid jobs at various times in their lives. At the time of the interview four women worked primarily as full-time homemakers. Two of these women were retired (from teaching and from secretarial positions), the third woman did volunteer work in her community and the fourth did some freelance work and took art classes. Except for the retired teacher who had her own pensions and owned a share of the family farm, these women were largely financially dependent on their husbands (who made from $18,000 to $30,000 a year). Table 1 compares the participants according to age, education, past work experience and current work.

Table 1

Participants' Age, Education, Past Work Experience, and Current Occupation

Participant	Age	Education	Past Work Experience	Current Occupation
Joan	34	grade 10 secretarial	waitress, clerk, secretary, bookkeeper, cashier, construction, ceramic tile business	real-estate
Beret	69	grade 12, Normal	teacher-24 years	retired teacher homemaker
Sally	23	grade 8		paid homemaker
Theresa	42	grade 9	store clerk manager, school bus driver, farm manager	supervisor, social service program
Madelaine	36	grade 12, secretarial school	clerk, receptionist, telephone operator	homemaker/volunteer
Christine	37	grade 12, technical school	clerk, typist, printer, sales, demonstrator, pipeline maintenance, auto mechanic	

Mary	35	BA, BLS	teacher, librarian, book editor	homemaker free lance editor music student
Jean	34	BA, BEd, technical school	machine operator, bank teller, library clerk, teacher	program developer
Heidi	51	grade 8, agricultural school	butcher shop, restaurant, furniture factory, sewing factories, housekeeper, bookkeeper, house builder, masonry, house renter, cleaner, painter, kitchen helper	house cleaner, house rental manager
Marcela	30	BA, MA, Ph.D. candidate	instructor, researcher, translator, free lance writer, editor	writer, publisher
Denise	64	high school, secretarial school	GWG seamstress, cashier trainer, secretary	retired secretary homemaker
Alice	32	BEd	drafting, model building, teacher, travel consultant	restaurant owner/manager.

Elizabeth	41	B Sc, Nursing graduate school	tobacco picker, cashier, nurse's aid, technician, nurse	secretary

Those currently working at paid jobs, received salaries ranging from $11,500 to $25,000 a year (A month prior to the interviews one woman had been living on $6,000 per year, one on $7,000 and one on $9,000).

The formal education level of the women's parents varied and was generally lower than what the women themselves attained. Seven of the women's parents had seven to nine years of formal education, one woman's parents had grade three and no formal education, one woman's parents had grade eight and grade ten formal education, two women's parents had some high school and two women's parents had some college or post-high-school training. In seven families, mothers had more education than the fathers and in five families the mothers and fathers had equivalent education. The ages of the women when they left their parental home varied from 15 to 21. Eleven of the women married. Age of first marriage ranged from 15 to 30. Five women eventually divorced and two were widowed. Of these seven, two remarried. Eight of the women had children and six of these women had children still living at home. Of these, one had pre-school children, four had school-age children and one had a child living with her who worked. Three of the eight women with children were currently single parents and one had previously been a single parent. Past and current husbands varied also in terms of education and occupation. Table 2 describes marital status, age when left home, age when married, age when divorced or widowed, age when remarried, number and age of children and grandchildren, education and occupation of husband.

Table 2

Participant's Marital Status, Age When Left Home, Age When Married, Age When Divorced or Widowed, Age When Remarried, Number and Age of Children Grandchildren, Education and Occupation of Husband.

Participant	Marital Status	Age when left home	Age when married	Age when divorced widowed remarried or cohabiting	Number & age of children & grandchildren	Education Occupation of Husbands/Cohabitors
Joan	married	17	20		1 daughter–14 1 son–11	grade 7 construction
Beret	married	18	26		2 daughters –39,35 4 grandchildren	grade 8, retired farmer
Sally	widowed	15	15	18(w)	1 daughter–8	grade 12, laborer, carpenter, researcher
Theresa	married	17	17			grade 8, farmer, bus driver
Madelaine	married	18	21		2 daughters –13,6 1 son–11	grade 12, technical school, communication technician
Christine	divorced	18	21	30(d)	1 daughter–15 1 son–13	university, chartered accountant

Mary	remarried	18	24	30(d) 31(r)	1 son–3 1 daughter–2	PhD, professor (first) BA & graduate work civil servant (second)
Jean	single	16				
Heidi	divorced	17	23	51	2 daughters –25,20 1 son–	grade 8, brick layer
Marcela	divorced	17	21	27(d) 30(c)		MA, graduate student (first) BSc,MD, doctor (second)
Denise	remarried	18	24	31(w) 40(r)	2 sons–33,23 2 grandchildren	Armed Forces (first) grade 10 truck driver (second)
Alice	single	21				
Elizabeth	divorced	18	30	36(d) 38–40(c)		MA,LLB, professor (first) high school, partsman (second)

B. The Interview Questions

Five pilot interviews were conducted to test the original questions.[13] The final interview questions, refined as a result of the pilot, the candidacy exam, and further investigation were as follows:

1. What has it meant to you to be a woman?
2. What do you value in your life?
3. What do you regret or resent in your life?
4. What do you value in yourself?
5. What do you dislike in yourself?
6. In what ways have you experienced yourself as powerful?
7. In what ways have you experienced yourself as powerless?
8. What do you think about this saying: "It's a man's world."?
9. What do you think about the Women's Movement?
10. What are your feelings about this interview?
11. Would it have made any difference to you if you had been interviewed by a man?

Question one is taken from deBeauvoir: it is the question she asked herself before writing The Second Sex (McCall, 1979). From this question the central theme of this study emerges (as is described in Chapter I). Questions two to nine serve the purpose of enlarging and clarifying answers given to question one. They were chosen because they involve concepts that seem to be closely related to meanings of being a woman and to the experiencing of self as Object or Subject. Traditional research on the topics of values and power has been demonstrated to be inadequate as regards women. It has been suggested that the fact that these concepts have been based on men's experience alone, has limited the concept in human terms. For example, Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which categorizes values into a hierarchy, was based on male subjects only (Gilligan, 1977, 1979). When women were later tested and their answers compared to the answers given by men, Kohlberg judged the women to be less morally developed. He assumed that women's values were less developed because they tended to be more reality bound while men tended to be ideology bound. Gilligan (1977, 1979) also criticized Kohlberg's research methodology – that he tested men in

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[13]Data from the pilot interviews was not used because the interviews were not taped.

theoretical situations. She tested women in real dilemmas – in the reality of their everyday worlds. The results she obtained challenge Kohlberg's theory, method and procedure.

The problems seen in Kohlberg's study of moral development are found generally in the literature on values. In other words, values are discussed theoretically (in an idealized sense) rather than as they relate to the context of individuals' daily lives (Drew & Lipson, 1971). Yet Sherif (1979a) makes clear that there is a complex link between people's personal integrity and their behavior. She explains that people's opinions or answers to questions may change, depending on how important a particular issue is to them. The empirical research method typically does not differentiate the importance of questions to participants, however. Empirical studies on values typically ask participants to priorize a list of values chosen by the researcher. The researcher is unaware of whether the list of values used in the test coincides with the participants' values, or to what degree the priorized values are relevant to the participants. The phenomenological method, which requires open–ended questions and in–depth exploration, allows for this information to emerge. Meanings of their values to the participants can be examined.

Current feminist literature on women's values is confusing and incomplete. Generally, sociological literature tells us women suffer from being subordinate and devalued in society and psychological literature tell us that women do value themselves highly in certain ways. For example, although children and the work of caring for children is not highly valued in society, women nevertheless appear to value motherhood (Fransella & Frost, 1977). In this sense, women do not seem to hold with society's evaluation. As regards women and marriage, it has been demonstrated that married women report that they like being married. However, there is also evidence that married women are less healthy mentally than single women (Bernard, 1973a). That there may be more to these issues than is presently understood, is suggested by Oakley (1974). She demonstrated that when women were asked if they were generally satisfied or unsatisfied with their lives they initially gave a superficial answer in the positive. However, further discussion resulted in the uncovering of negative answers and explanations of dissatisfactions. She also discovered that there was a class difference in women's initial willingness to admit dissatisfaction – whereas middle–class women

easily admit dissatisfaction, working-class women initially reported satisfaction but after further questioning reported a great deal of dissatisfaction. Rossi (1972) suggests that women are less willing to express negative feelings about roles which feel "obligatory" and more willing to express ambivalence about roles which feel "optional." She was able to make this interpretation because her research method allowed for an in-depth exploration. A phenomenological examination of women's values thus appears in order.

Questions about the experience of feeling powerful and powerless have been included in this study because there is confusion about the terms in the social sciences and in feminist literature and because the concepts of powerful and powerless seem closely tied to the experience of self as Subject or Other. Sociologists, historians and anthropologists have traditionally used the term "power" in the social and political sense and take for granted that women have no power in these spheres. Some feminist sociologists (Bardwick, 1979; Janeway, 1975, 1980) and historians (Cott, 1977; Lerner, 1976) have begun to question this definition of power and to examine the dialectic between women's formal status as powerless and their informal use of power. Similarly, some feminist anthropologists have demonstrated that when women are formally denied certain forms of power, they create other forms (Ardener, E., 1975; Ardener, S., 1975b; Okely, 1975; Rosaldo, 1974; Stack, 1974; Wolf, 1974). In psychology, power has been defined as arising from external or internal sources, and as having impact on self or others (McClelland, 1975). Humanist psychologists have interpreted personal power as relating to knowledge and growth of self in therapy and in learning (Rogers, 1977). While recognizing that authority systems operate politically to destroy people's personal power, [14] they have not acknowledged that women encounter real barriers to achieving personal power in North American society. Feminist psychologists have recognized this, however, and have begun to explore power as both a personal and political force in women's lives (Lips, 1979, 1981; Lips & Colwill, 1979; Miller, 1976). The idea that women are more than powerless victims (more than Other) and can be powerful in terms of their capabilities, as well as in reaction to their oppression (be Subject), is, therefore, closely linked to this study. The phenomenological method allows for the exploration of how the participants experience being powerful

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[14]Rogers (1977) refers to the revolutionary movement of Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed .

and powerless, and what this means to them. The questions about "It's a man's world" and the Women's Movement allow for an exploration of woman's interpretation of these concepts and their consciousness of patriarchal and feminist ideologies. Again, it is expected that their answers to these questions will relate to their experience of themselves as Other and/or as Subject.

Questions 10 and 11 relate to the participant's experience with the interview and interviewer. Methodology has been of particular interest to me – especially in so far as research is used as a political tool for the benefit of those with knowledge (as discussed in Chapter II) and in so far as it has been demonstrated that research methods may permit or hide sexist bias (as discussed in Chapter III). Therefore, I decided to ask the participants questions that would allow me to briefly explore with them these issues.

C. The Interview Procedure

The interviews were conducted between November, 1980 and March, 1981. Willing participants were located through participants in the five pilot interviews, through women I had worked with in rural communities, and through relatives, friends and acquaintences. The women were simply asked if they would be willing to participate in a lengthy interview with a university graduate student who was also a psychologist, about what it means to them to be a woman. When it was determined that a woman was interested in participating in the study, I phoned her to briefly explain the nature of the study (what it means to women to be women) and to inform her of the time required to complete the interview (several hours, probably two sessions). Further, I informed each participant that the interviews would be taped but that their identities would be kept confidential. I made clear that we needed a quiet place to talk without interruptions, and then gave the participant a choice as to where she would like to be interviewed. A mutually convenient time and date was set for the first interview session. Seven interviews took place in the participant's home, three in the participant's or my office, two in a hotel room and one in my home. Most of the interviews required two sessions on two separate days. Length of total interview time for each participant ranged from four to nine hours. Phone calls or further interviewing was often necessary in order to gain additional information or to clarify meanings.

The interviews were conducted in an informal and relaxed way, usually over cups of tea or coffee. Again I explained the purpose of the study and my interest in having women speak for themselves. My opening remarks were as follows:

> I am interested to learn what it means and has meant to women to be a woman. Until recently, most of what was written about the psychology of women was written by men. I want to know about women's experience from their point of view. I believe that every woman has an important story to tell and that these stories could be helpful to other women.

These remarks sparked interest and trust, I believe. Some women were initially nervous about being taped but soon relaxed and became less self-conscious once the interview was underway. I believe that my skills as a therapist and teacher/trainer in the area of communication enabled me to put the participants at ease and to encourage them to reflect on their experience and its meaning to them. (For a summary of my qualifications and experience as a therapist and my knowledge and practise of communication skills, see Appendix A). The interviewer's skill in establishing trust and facilitating open communication effects the validity of the study. A further explanation of how this was accomplished, from the point of view of the participants, is included in Chapter VIII.

The interview questions were asked in the order given above. Some women began discussing their experiences chronologically, others began with the present, and others began with their most intense experience. If women did not voluntarily speak of the past, they were directed to do so. My comments followed the rules of good communication skills, and I frequently used paraphrasing (stating in my own words what had been told to me) as a means of encouraging the participant to continue. After the participant had described a particular incident or explained an experience, I typically asked: "What did that mean to you?." After three or four hours we stopped the interview and set a time for the second session. At the end of the final session the woman was asked to choose a first name she would like to be known as in the study. Finally, a questionnaire was given to obtain demographical information (see Appendix B). Notes were sent to the participants to thank them for their time and cooperation. Approximately six months after the interviews, a questionnaire (see Appendix C) was sent to the participants inquiring about their reaction to the interview.

D. The Analysis

The tapes were transcribed verbatim. These transcriptions were then edited into sentences and paragraphs and the interviewer's comments were omitted. Three copies of each interview were made at this second stage. Charts were constructed so that the participants' answers to each question could be compared. A color-coded system was created (one color for each question) so that each participant's interview could be categorized into themes (by the cut and sort method) and the knowledge of which question had elicited which response be retained. Three kinds of analysis were then attempted:

1. The Case Studies

   The content of the interviews was organized into a case study focusing on the meanings of being a woman, for each of the 13 participants. The purpose of the case studies is to demonstrate how each woman makes sense of her experiences as a woman, and provides her own structure for the meanings of her lived experience. They also demonstrate the dynamic process of women's lives.

2. The Meanings of Being a Woman

   A phenomenological-type analysis of the meanings women gave to their lived experience as women, resulted in a list of meanings for each woman. The 13 lists were then compared and categories established according to the predominant themes, as they arose from the interviews. It became obvious that some meanings resulted in positive feelings and some in negative, so these two major categories became the first level of classification. Within these two categories, sub-categories were determined on the basis of issues ranging from personal to interpersonal to social, cultural and political. Care was taken in the discussion of these results to explain that the same meanings may be derived from similar or different experiences, and that different meanings may be derived from a similar or different experience.

3. The Context of Women's Experience as Women

   The personal and material bases for experiences from which meanings of being a woman were derived was analyzed using a critical theory, feminist approach. Consideration was given to Haymond's (1982) categories of dimensions

of experience as outlined in his doctoral dissertation. Haymond outlines three major dimensions which he calls macro, molar and micro, under each of which numerous factors are categorized. According to Haymond's categories, Family Relationships and other Social Factors would be categorized together under molar dimensions. However, in this study so much material involving family relationships was obtained, that it warranted a category unto itself. Therefore, Haymond's classification system was adapted to fit the material derived from the case studies, resulting in the following four categories:

a. Individual Factors

b. Family Relationships

c. Social Factors

d. Cultural/Political Factors

In the final step, the results of the case studies and the two analyses regarding meanings and context were discussed and literature relevant to these findings was reported. The procedure of making connections to relevant research and literature at the end of the research process (rather than at the beginning, as is done using the experimental method) is in keeping with the phenomenological method of study, as explained in Chapter II. Conclusions were drawn, limitations discussed and implications for further research explored.

V. The Case Studies

As explained in Chapter I, Chapter V contains the case studies and will follow in a separate volume. The case studies will be presented in Volume II in the following order:

1. Joan
2. Beret
3. Sally
4. Theresa
5. Madelaine
6. Christine
7. Mary
8. Jean
9. Heidi
10. Marcela
11. Denise
12. Alice
13. Elizabeth.

VI. Analysis of the Case Studies: The Meanings of Being a Woman

A. Introduction

The sections that follow will be a discussion of meanings shared by some of the 13 participants – themes arising from the meanings they associate with their experiences. The themes discussed were not always identified directly in answer to the question "What has it meant to you to be a woman?" For example, a woman might first state what being a woman has been like for her (a struggle, a burden, fulfilling, challenging, etc.). On the other hand, she might begin by identifying a role (mother, daughter, etc.) or an experience (having a hysterectomy, working at a particular job, being abused as a child, etc.). In the latter cases, further questioning directed the woman to focus on what the role or experience *meant* to her. The following sections outline major themes arising from the interviews in answer to the question "What has it meant to you to be a woman?" Because the themes seemed to fall 'naturally' into the broad categories of positive and negative meanings of being a woman, they will be discussed as such. This does not mean, however, that being a woman was experienced as either positive or negative by any one woman; all of the 13 participants, in fact, experienced being a woman as both positive and negative. Nor does the experience being positive or negative necessarily imply any particular way of behaving in relation to the experience. As was stated above, there is no one simple formula to explain the meanings to women of being a woman.

B. The Positive Meanings of Being a Woman

All of the women found positive meaning or in some way related positively to being a woman. For some a positive meaning was an initial and major focus; for some it was only one of a broad range of meanings (positive and negative), and for others a positive meaning was of minor importance. The women who felt positively about being a woman did so for different reasons, as will be explained. Six general categories of positive meanings of being a woman will be discussed in the following order:

14. Being Womanly, Feminine, Sexual, or Desirable
15. Finding Fulfillment in the Role of Mother or Valuing Children

16. Being Warm, Caring, Sensitive, Understanding and Helpful
17. Finding Satisfaction in Achieving Relationships
18. Finding Satisfaction in Work Outside the Home
19. Finding Meaning in the Ideals and Goals of the Women's Movement.

Being Womanly, Feminine or Sexual

Eleven of the 13 participants felt positive about being women in the sense of being womanly, feminine or sexual. Marcela enjoys being a woman in the sense of being "womanly." She has always wanted to be "womanly," she explains, and believes that being comfortable with her physical self – her "womanhood" – means to her that she has a trustworthy instrument which enables her to communicate to others. Marcela does not trust women who are not comfortable being women (nor does she trust women sho are not conscious of how women are oppressed – who are not feminists). Being sexually intimate with a man is also a part of being a woman that Marcela enjoys. Her feminist consciousness does not require her to be anti–male, she explains. In fact, she has always believed that an intimate relationship with a man is a necessary ingredient for her own happiness. When Marcela was married, being sexually intimate was less important to her than being spiritually close. Upon leaving her marriage she became quite "opportunistic" about sex, using sexual encounters for physical satisfaction but guarding against emotional involvement. To this end she engaged only in oral sex and refused intercourse. Now in a monogamous relationship, she feels free to "let go" and be emotionally involved, and experiences much pleasure in intercourse.

Theresa enjoys her "femininity" and likes dressing to emphasize it. She enjoys being perceived as attractive and appreciates being flattered by a male. While valuing her female friends, she also values her interest in and attraction to men, believing that "opposites attract." It is extremely important to Theresa that she be respected, not in spite of being a woman but *as a woman*. She explains that while she wants to be respected for her capabilities and personal qualities, she also wants to be respected in her femaleness. She is concerned that women are held in disrespect by men today, not because they are incapable but because they are female. This angers her. The notion that women deserve respect as women, Theresa learned long ago from her mother. She also learned from her mother that sexual monogamy is important. She doesn't like the

idea of "hopping into bed with any guy" and similarly demands of her husband that "I have to be number one and that's it." Having a good sex life with her husband is part of having an equal relationship and good marriage, she maintains.

Like Theresa, Denise is concerned that women be respected and also that they respect themselves as women. Aware that many men do not respect women simply because they are female, Denise is thankful that her parents taught her to respect herself and prepared her to take her place in the world alongside men. Being comfortable with her body and respecting her own sexuality has always seemed "natural" to Denise. Again she emphasizes that she was well prepared at home for this aspect of life, believing her parents to be advanced thinkers in their time. She considers herself "lucky" to have not been interested in sex at puberty as some girls were, because this meant to her that she didn't *need* to have a boyfriend. At present she feels very comfortable with her body and concludes, "I'm glad I'm feminine."

Both Alice and Joan, while primarily thinking of themselves as persons rather than women, enjoy looking feminine in the sense of looking womanly or appearing sexually attractive to men. However, what being feminine means to these women differs. Having her cigarette lit or a door opened for her reaffirms for Joan that her female attractiveness is recognized and appreciated, and makes her feel desirable. Thus for Joan, femininity relates to her sexuality. She states:

> I feel pretty good about my own sexuality..... I enjoy being a woman in that aspect. I enjoy sex and I like the idea of men pursuing me, which they do.

This has not always been the case with Joan, however, as will be discussed under "Negative Meanings of Being a Woman."

Alice's idea of femininity involves appearance, roles and stereotyped social behavior. She explained that she particularly feels "the picture of a woman" when she is with a big, strong man who is "the picture of a man." Her images also involve the man being dominant and decisive, and herself being submissive and dependent. In keeping with her image of femininity, Alice plays at being weak, submissive and frivolous, consciously using her feminine charm and attraction to influence others and control their behavior. She recognizes that "playing feminine" in this sense can be a disadvantage to her in that she may not be taken seriously and may not be respected. Nevertheless, she persists in her play-acting, knowing that manipulating men with her "feminine wiles"

works, and perceiving the more direct styles of taking power as distasteful. As regards sexual relationships, Alice is thankful that due to the availability of birth control she is free as a single woman to have a satisfactory sex life. She realizes now that her childhood abhorrence of "old maids" was the idea that they must be "sexless."

Madelaine speaks of the power she experiences as a woman – a power derived from the fact that men find her attractive. Having the power to give or withhold sexual intimacy is experienced by Madelaine in her relationship with her husband. With other men, she now perceives herself less as having power and more as just being appreciated, a change in perspective she relates to changes in her own sense of self–worth.

Elizabeth enjoys herself in sexual relationships, though she is not presently involved in one. She believes that her being the victim of incest did not make her fearful of sexual encounters, probably because the incest did not involve intercourse and because her first lover was very giving. However, she quickly cuts off a sexual relationship if the man is sexually ignorant or if she feels unequal in the relationship. She will not tolerate a sense of being "used" or "victimized."

Mary similarly feels good about her own sexuality, even after having learned to repress sexual feelings and feel guilty about having them as an adolescent. Her sex life has varied tremendously. She explains that she had a "really good sex life" with her first husband before they were married. However, on their honeymoon his sexual behavior seemed to her to become "kinky" and "calculated." She felt "used" in the relationship and eventually became sexually inactive. Having an affair with a young man, however, she describes as "very lovely." In her second marriage Mary finds her sex life to be good and wholesome, though more conservative. Fear of a third unwanted pregnancy made her uninterested in sex, until her husband got a vasectomy.

Christine enjoys her sexual self but this has not always been the case. She found that in her marriage she could not express her sexuality fully. She explains: "I was sort of relating but on a surface level, not particularly intimate." Further, she was always waiting for her husband to approach her and found this very frustrating. Whereas Christine finds herself to be afraid or insecure in a sexual relationship with a man, she has discovered she is much more relaxed and comfortable with a woman. She explains:

"With women it feels so much more open and equal and there is no fear of rejection or whatever." Further, with women she finds she is able to say what she needs and feels, and this feels more positive. Having been an active lesbian for about seven years, Christine has discovered that women together have the same problems as men and women together – that a successful relationship requires having mutual needs and desires and compatible personalities. What she wants in an intimate relationship, whether that be with a woman or a man, is mutual support, sharing, respect and acceptance of the individual.

Beret and Heidi did not speak of their sexuality per se, but did describe how they enjoy being appreciated or seen as in some way desirable. Beret enjoys being a woman in that this allows her to indulge herself in a greater variety of clothing than is allowed a man. She also appreciates being a woman at a dance, because she perceives men asking her to dance as a compliment – it reaffirms for her that she is a good dancer and a desirable partner. Heidi, too, now that she has divorced her abusive husband and is free to date other men, feels good about being a woman in the sense that she now has a reason to feel attractive. She enjoys getting her hair done and getting dressed up, and when she receives compliments about how she looks it makes her "feel good." About being a woman in this sense she concludes, "I wouldn't have it any other way."

Finding Fulfillment in Nurturing Children

All of the eight participants who have children referred to their children in a positive way. For three of the women, being a mother has been a major positive aspect of being a woman. For the remaining five women, nurturing children or the children themselves are valued, but being a mother also brings conflict. For Beret and Denise, being a woman is fulfilling in that nurturing their children was a very meaningful experience for them. The role of mother, they believe, added a rich dimension to their lives that their husbands have missed. Valuing this experience, both women stated that they felt luckier than their husbands and would not wish to trade places (roles) with them. For Denise, nurturing her children seemed to come naturally to her. She values this activity, believing that children must be "properly rooted" in the home so that they can go out into the world in a meaningful way. That her children love and respect her today means to her that she has done a good job and deserves their love. However, Denise

demonstrates some confusion about the potential of women and men to be nurturing and understanding. On the one hand, she seems to imply that women, because they have children, have a special talent to be nurturing and sensitive to children, thus assuming "mothering" to be *natural*. On the other hand, she speaks of how her father was more sensitive to her needs than was her mother. The confusion, it seems, is between what Denise thinks *should* happen and what actually has happened; ideology replaces reality as a basis for generalizations. Another indication that ideology overrides reality centers around the issue of mothering necessarily excluding work outside the home. Denise deplores the current tendency of women to put their children in nurseries or day care centers and go out to work, believing that mothering is a full-time career. When stating this, she seems to forget that when she became a widow she herself went out to work and relied on others to care for her baby. Apparently, she sees ideology as the rule and her own experience as the exception to the rule.

Beret talks about being "lucky" to be a woman because in the role of mother she was allowed to spend more time with her children and had closer contact with them than did her husband. She understands that it was her individual personality in conjunction with the social role of mother, rather than her femaleness, that resulted in her finding satisfaction in nurturing her children, however. In fact, she perceives her liking and enjoyment of children as something she "got from" her father, whom she perceived as more affectionate and gentle than her mother. Like Denise, Beret sees raising her children as an accomplishment – a contribution of good citizens to society. Beret also enjoys being able to "touch the lives" of her grandchildren: watch them grow, enjoy their activities and influence them somewhat. If she didn't have her children and grandchildren in her life, she thinks she would be very lonely. It seems significant that although both Denise and Beret perceive nurturing children as a major aspect of their being women, neither relied totally on their fulfillment as mothers for their satisfaction. Both women also had full time careers which they experienced as highly satisfying. Interestingly, both women were young mothers in the 1940s during the Second World War and both women entered the work force out of necessity (Denise because she became a war widow and Beret because of a teacher shortage in her community).

Raising and caring for her children has always been important to Heidi. As she states, "My family was always first to me. I love my children and they love me." She seems to imply in the interview that it is the proper role of women to care for their children and that they are more capable of doing this than are men. Her experience was that her husband, who abused all of their children and her, was less capable than she of nurturing their children. However, she makes a connection between the love from her parents, especially from her father, and the love she was able to give her children. (She also makes a connection between the abuse and neglect her husband suffered as a child and his abusive behavior toward herself and their children.) Heidi's dedication to providing for her children extended to the point of her sacrificing her own mental health and well-being by staying with her husband, in part so that her children could receive an education and enjoy the benefits of a higher standard of living than she could have provided for them on her own.

Christine values the nurturing aspect of being a mother and also values her children as people. She perceives the warmth and caring that she can express to others (her children included) as something women are *allowed* to do. Thus she believes that it is not being female, per se, that determines women's ability to be nurturing, but rather that society *expects* women to be nurturing. Being a mother has not always been a rewarding experience for Christine, however. In the beginning it was a struggle, as is discussed under "Negative Meanings of Being a Woman." Now, as a single parent, Christine is solely responsible for creating and maintaining a stable home for her children as well as being a full-time wage earner. While she sometimes finds this difficult and exhausting, she also perceives it as a challenge, and values being a mother who is 'there' for her children in a way her parents were never 'there' for her. Further, she believes that taking care of children teaches us to be less self-centered.

Whereas Christine values the act of nurturing her children as well as valuing her children, Sally, Joan, Madelaine and Mary speak only of valuing their children. Being a mother has been or is currently a conflict for them. The negative aspects of the conflict will be examined under "Negative Meanings of Being a Woman." Sally's adolescent and young adult life has been centered around her being a mother to the extent that being a woman means first, to her, being a mother. Though being a mother has been a struggle

and conflict for Sally, still, when asked what she valued in her life she immediately replied, "that I have my daughter – she's my own and she's all I've really got." She worries about the bad experiences her daughtèr has had, and hopes that when her daughter is older they'll be able to talk the way Sally and her mother never could.

Although being at home with her children was a bad experience for Joan, she too values her children. She explains that she has no "maternal instinct" but is concerned for her children's health and happiness. Her concern is especially strong for her son since he was in an accident that left him handicapped, and she hopes he will grow up to lead a normal life. She does not worry about her daughter, trusting that she will be fine, although she is sometimes frustrated that her daughter's career plans are less ambitious than she would like them to be.

Although Madelaine claims not to feel the kind of love for her children that she thinks she *should*, or that society *expects*, she nevertheless values them. She wishes she could have been as comfortable at home with her first two children as she was with her third child. She believes that providing a good home for her children is a contribution to her community.

Mary's identity as a woman is tied closely with being a mother. Although she finds her responsibilities as a mother frustrating, she nevertheless values her children highly, relating her feelings to her original Hispanic culture. She has learned a lot about herself by being a mother, she maintains. She has been forced to grow up and be responsible, and is proud of and thankful for her children in spite of the difficulties they represent. Mary is especially concerned that her daughter doesn't grow up with negative feelings about her body or with doubts about her abilities – feelings that were problematic for her.

Being Warm, Caring, Sensitive, Understanding and Helpful

The three women who found fulfillment in nurturing children, also valued highly that they were understanding and caring toward others. Denise feels contented being a woman, knowing that she can understand and be helpful to people in pain – friends, neighbors and people she works with. However, there is indication of some confusion on her part as to why she as a woman is compassionate. She implies that she is *naturally* understanding because of a "female instinct," holding to the adage that if

women ruled the world there would be no war. Supporting this belief is her perception that female teachers she worked with were more understanding of students than were male teachers, and an idea that female doctors would have a "softer touch" than male doctors. However, she does not, in her instinct theory, account for her story of how a male principal taught her to be more sensitive and flexible about students' behavior, or how men were more compassionate toward her than were women when she was a widow. Again we witness in Denise's thinking how ideology takes precedence over reality.

Beret enjoys having been able to help, influence and enjoy – "touch the lives" of – the many children she taught for 24 years. She also enjoys the "fellowship" she experiences with friends who come to visit and with women she works with in community organizations, again seeing these experiences as *available* to her because she is a woman. In other words, in her community these activities are seen as *appropriate* for and even as *expected* of women. Beret, herself, enjoys people because of the kind of person she is – kind, gentle and warm, like her father.

Christine also values relationships with other people, children and adults alike. Being soft, warm and caring feels good to her. Being supportive, helping others and sharing her talents makes her feel worthwhile and that she is contributing to society. Women, she believes, are *allowed* to be "more human" than are men in our society, and because of this she enjoys other women and is very glad to be a woman herself. This is a relatively new experience for Christine, however, discovered only after she left her marriage and after she learned to care about and enjoy herself.

For Madelaine, who has had difficulty feeling nurturing toward her children, being understanding or helpful is not a major issue. Lately, however, she has begun to reach out to others and help them if she can, and is learning to value that she can do this. She spoke specifically about understanding and supporting women who are home alone with small children, and being interested also in relating to older people and teenagers with problems.

Two women who are not mothers (Elizabeth out of choice and Theresa due to physiological problems) value the warm and caring aspect of their personalities which enables them to understand and help others. Elizabeth, like Christine, relates this aspect

of her personality to being a woman, believing that social expectations and sex-role stereotypes prevent men from being human in this sense. Thus, she relates being a woman in present North American society to being freer of the dominant masculine values and attitudes which she perceives to be based on reductive thinking, to be rigid and judgemental and to be geared to achieving success and power at any cost. Being a woman today means to her that she can be warm and close to other women, be truthful, spontaneous and freer to set her own standards of morality. In the past, caring for others in her role as a nurse gave her much satisfaction. The caring she experienced at this time was more in the physical sense of caring, however, than in her own emotional experience of feeling warmth and caring. She believes that never having received emotional nurturance as a child, she did not understand it and could not give or receive it. Thus, being a genuinely warm and caring person is a relatively new experience for Elizabeth, an experience she now values for herself and for the understanding and support she can give to others.

Theresa values that she is warm, outgoing, caring and understanding. These qualities, in conjunction with being open-minded and always interested to learn, bring her satisfaction both personally and in her work. She does not attribute these qualities in herself as particular to women, however, seeing them more as having developed from the kind of person she is and the experiences she has had.

Finding Satisfaction in Achieving Relationships

All of the participants found satisfaction in relationships with others. For some women satisfaction was found in marriage or an intimate relationship, for others family of origin was important and for others friendships were valued. Some women valued all of these types of relationships for various reasons.

1. Marriage or Intimacy:

Of the six women currently living in intimate relationships, four of them spoke of valuing their intimate relationships with husbands or a lover, and one woman also valued her previous marriage. Theresa values her marriage because she feels equal to her husband - a full partner in life. It also means to her being able to work toward goals together with someone and being able to share daily experiences at the end of the day. Madelaine and Mary value their marriages, too,

although they experience conflict with their husbands and desire changes in the marriages. Madelaine values her husband because he is a companion and friend to her and a good father to their children. Mary values the special connection she feels to her husband and their joint commitment to life goals. She respects the person her husband is and admires his commitment to family life. Denise values both of her marriages, although for different reasons. Her first husband was both a friend and lover with whom she experienced a very deep closeness – a special kind of love which is rarely experienced, she believes. Her second husband is a good companion who brings her a sense of security and contentment and adds to her sense of family. Marcela, though not married, values the intimate relationship she has with the man she is living with, believing this intimacy to be ultimately necessary for her own happiness.

2. Family of Origin:

For 10 of the 13 participants, their relationship with their family of origin remains a meaningful connection, although the reasons for and intensity of these relationships differ. Sally, Theresa, Denise and Alice have on-going, mutually supportive contact with certain members of their families. Sally feels closest to a female cousin she grew up with, and to her father with whom she experiences a mutual caring and love. She continues to feel conflict about her mother, as she did in the past, although values that her mother is there when she needs her. Denise once felt especially close to her father, who she felt was always fair and who taught her to respect herself and to be honest. Now that her parents have died, she keeps in close touch with her brothers and sisters. Theresa has always felt especially close to her mother, and treasures the memory of a great-grandmother who was a model of a strong and independent women. Just knowing that her family cares about her and would support her if need be is an important element in Theresa's life. Family to Alice means those people who are "always loving" and "always there." She feels especially close to her mother since her father's death, explaining how her relationship to her mother has changed – that whereas her mother once supported her, she is now looking after her mother. Ten years ago Alice would have considered this role-reversal a burden; now it's a positive

experience. Beret and Heidi value the influence their families had on them in the past, but have experienced the loss of both parents. They have only limited contact with their brothers and sisters, and have replaced family with friends. Mary values her family ties and regrets that she lives so far away from her family that she can seldom see them. She, too, has replaced family with friends. Madelaine has fewer contacts with her family than she used to, and regrets the loss of contact that she feels. Family to her means largely memories of times past, although she has come to know and understand her mother more since her father's death. For Jean, her family is a connection to the past, rather than an on-going aspect of her present life. The family members she felt closest to, her father and brother, have both died. She desires a relationship with her mother but still finds being with her mother uncomfortable. Marcela states that she values her family not for who they are as individuals but because she is committed to the notion of family. For the time being, at least, she feels it is best that there is distance between herself and her family.

The above is merely a brief discussion of the women's relationship to their family of origin, generally, or to the *idea* of family. Relationships with specific family members and their significance to the women will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

3. Friends:

Twelve of the 13 participants valued their friendships highly. Denise, the only woman who did not particularly value her friends, explained that having a large and close family with whom she is still in touch (some sisters daily) probably results in her not developing close friendships. Also a factor was that Denise was very busy during her young adulthood being a single parent and working mother, and chose not to speak of her situation to people outside of her family.

According to the 12 women who valued their friends highly, friends can take the place of family members that live far away, are no longer living or were never particularly supportive. Friends may, in addition, meet needs that family members do not. Friends are perceived as a family substitute by Beret, Heidi and Mary, who by virtue of various circumstance are no longer in close touch with

their families. Beret values the fellowship and mutual concern for each other's welfare that she experiences with women in her community. She is closer to these people than to her family, she explained. Heidi values the friends and neighbors who cared for her children when she was ill and who gave her advice and support, when as a young immigrant woman she had no mother nearby to turn to for assistance. Today she values her friends as people with whom she can finally enjoy herself. Mary values having achieved long-lasting friendships (both male and female). Friends today are people with whom she can talk openly and feel close, the connection being understanding and acceptance rather than blood. Like Mary, Theresa values the friendships she has with both women and men, friendships which she experiences somewhat differently. From men she expects to often get a different point of view, and she is aware, too, that opposites attract. Alice values her friends – people with whom she can "spill her guts" and "share her laughs." Madelaine values her friends as a source of support – people with whom she can talk easily and can help and be helped by. Jean values the friends she has made at her job, with whom she experiences acceptance and support. However, she feels restricted making friends because of her own fears of rejection. Further, she does not consider herself a good friend because she lacks the time and energy required to maintain close friendships.

An important aspect of friendship for seven of the 12 women who value friendships is the special closeness they experience with women. Mary explains that she first learned to value women as friends in a book club inspired by the Women's Movement. In her college days women were all on the "meat-market," competing for the right man. Marcela, like Mary, values having learned to make friends with women. Her early experience had taught her that, much as she wanted to, she could not safely trust women – they were competitive amongst themselves and would always choose to be with a man first. The Women's Movement changed this, she believes. Elizabeth also values having learned to be close to women, whose reality she can better understand as a result of her involvement in the Women's Movement. Whereas she used to think that she valued people in general, she now understands that she values people with whom she can experience a

meaningful interchange – people who mostly happen to be women. Joan values that she finally has women friends at work who, like herself, experienced dissatisfaction being at home with their children. Prior to this she felt uninterested in the women she knew who stayed home with their children and who seemed to be "just waiting." Christine once felt alienated from the women who were her neighbors in the suburbs, whom she perceived as living their lives vicariously through their husbands. She cherishes her current friendships with women who are actively involved in work outside the home, and with whom she experiences mutual understanding and support. She also finds support from the women she works with in the Women's Movement. At the moment, she is aware of missing friendships with other single parents. Sally appreciates that she has women friends who, like her, are single parents and who can be understanding and supportive. Together they share their pain and frustration and for awhile can laugh and have fun too. Theresa speaks about one female friend in particular with whom she feels especially close – closer than sisters. With this friend, she can share both troubles and joys, experience a common outlook on life and feel she is accepted entirely for herself.

Finding Satisfaction in Work Outside the Home

1. Achieving a Sense of Independence, Security, Control, Freedom or Power:

Eleven of the 13 participants found satisfaction in paid work done outside the home. Of these 11, six women claimed that their jobs gave them a sense of independence or control over their lives. That they valued this highly was evidenced in their responses to the question, "What do you value in your life?" Joan explains that having her own money as a result of her career in real estate gives her a sense of security, of knowing she can take care of herself and her children and that "they'll never be out on the street." It also gives her a sense of *choosing* to be in her marriage, as opposed to *having* to be in it – a sense of freedom she very much enjoys. Ten years ago when Joan first took a part-time job as a cashier in a grocery store after having stayed home with her children for several years, she also experienced a sense of independence and freedom, just

from being out of the house and from having some money to spend that was hers alone.

Sally values her job as a homemaker (until recently part-time) because it means to her that she can take care of herself and her daughter on her own and thus be financially independent. She is also pleased that they are secure in their own home. Christine, also a single parent, similarly values that her real estate career enables her to maintain a stable home for herself and her children. In addition, she finds satisfaction in building a career in that she is making her own decisions and feels in charge of her own life. This, in fact, is what she values most in her life. Being financially independent and self-supporting also makes Jean feel worthwhile. Being independent has long been important to Jean, and means to her both being free of others' expectations and being able to look after herself. It is something she respects about herself. Like Jean, Marcela values her professional (and academic) success because it gives her the power to control her life circumstances, the power to be financially secure and to make choices. Having power and control in her life is in fact a major issue for Marcela. Alice experiences the success of her business as satisfying simply because she accomplished the goal she set for herself. Thinking independently and setting her own goals is a relatively new experience for Alice, representing a sense of self she gained at age 31. Prior to setting a meaningful goal for herself, she had been waiting for the right man to come along, and hence had never been really involved in her work. Heidi values not any particular job, but the fact that she is a hard worker. That she has worked hard her whole life means to her that she can now live out her life in security, and reap the benefits of her lifetime of work.

2. Feeling Capable in their Work:

Experiencing themselves as capable is another aspect of achieving satisfaction through work for seven of the 11 women who work outside the home. Joan is pleased to have proven to herself and to others that she is capable in her present career in real estate, and enjoys the status and recognition that come with being perceived as successful. Christine, realizing that she is capable of building a successful career in real estate, is especially pleased because as a child

she was given no encouragement to have a career. She had been prepared only to be "someone's wife." Theresa values that she is capable of carrying out her present work in social services in her community, especially because she lacks a formal education and a certificate which is often required of people who do such work. She also values her own abilities to perceive and understand people's problems and to be open-minded - abilities which enable her to continue learning and to do a good job with her clients. Beret too, is pleased to have the skills for the work she is now retired from - teaching children in school. She especially enjoyed teaching mathematics, which was easy for her.

Joan, Christine, Theresa and Beret were all pleased to have experienced, earlier in their lives, that they were capable of what is typically considered "man's work." Joan is pleased to have run her own business as a ceramic tile installer, believing herself to be even better at the job than most men because she took more care and was patient in her work. She also believes she could be a capable building contractor, in spite of the popular notion that women are not suited to such work, because she understands what women want in a house and because she perceives the job of planning construction and hiring subcontractors as not as difficult and mysterious as men make it out to be. Christine gained much self-esteem in discovering, after she had left her marriage, that she was capable of doing work stereotypically defined as "men's work," i.e., heavy farm work, fence mending, carpentry, plumbing, electrical wiring, etc. The experience for her, in conjunction with other experiences she had on a commune, was one of being free to experience herself in any way she chose. Theresa is satisfied to have been capable of managing her farm and driving a school bus in her husband's place when he was ill. She experienced both criticism and support from members of her community, all of whom perceived her as doing a "man's job." To Theresa, she was simply doing what was required, as she had done as a child growing up on a farm. Beret, too, grew up on a farm, and was actively involved in heavy "man's work" outside with her father and brothers. She continued doing farm work with her husband when he needed a hand. In spite of some concern that others might judge her to be "unfeminine," Beret was pleased to have been capable of doing this kind

of work – glad to have been able, needed and useful.

Jean, Marcela and Elizabeth obtain satisfaction in knowing thay are capable in their work and have been intellectually capable, in the past, of academic achievement. To Jean, being capable intellectually is what she values most about herself. She is pleased that her current job utilizes all of her previous formal training (theoretical and technical) and is satisfied that she is intellectually capable of her work (although she has some reservations about her personal capabilities). Being intellectually capable means to Marcela that she no longer has to rely on her vicarious experiencing of academic and professional success through a man. She can experience this for herself. She also values that she is capable of practical, domestic tasks – that she is well-rounded and is capable of using both her head and her hands, unlike most academics. Being capable in school brought Elizabeth much sought-after approval from her teachers, and to some extent redeemed her family in the eyes of the community, she thinks. Being capable at school meant that she could eventually get away from the abuse she suffered at home and from the narrow judgements of her community. Being capable at college again earned her the approval and support of her teachers, and contributed to her own happiness and self-esteem. Being a capable nurse in extreme nursing situations built her self-esteem and provided her with an opportunity to work as an equal member of a team within the medical profession.

3. Experiencing their Work as a Challenge:

Five of the 11 women who work outside of the home stated directly that they found satisfaction in their work because they experienced it as a challenge. Sally finds working as a paid homemaker a challenge because she never knows what problems she may have to deal with. Jean finds her job in the media challenging because the content is constantly changing. Elizabeth volunteered to nurse in Vietnam, knowing she was qualified and believing it would be a challenge. Theresa finds her job in social services challenging, explaining that she enjoys the process of helping others – what she puts into her work and what she learns from it. Marcela talked about being challenged by her paid work in her union position and in her unpaid political work in organizations and ad hoc groups. The sense of

being challenged in their work appears important to these women in that their work provides an opportunity for them to achieve their potential – to use their personal strengths and skills in order to complete a task or meet a goal. Though not stating so directly, three of the remaining six women who work outside of their homes implied that they have experienced their work as challenging. Christine spoke of liking herself because she is "gutsy" – not afraid to try something new and willing to experiment and learn. Beginning a new career in real estate at age 36 is difficult for her but she enjoys it. Joan's job in real estate appears to have been especially challenging for her when she was just getting started in it and wanted to prove to herself and others she could do it. She is not challenged now, however; rather, she is aware of the attitudinal barriers which prevent her from improving her position and status by entering commercial real estate. Similarly, Alice was once challenged by the goal she set for herself to open and operate a successful business. Once her goal was achieved, she became aware of entering a new phase in her work. At the time of the interview, she was debating whether to rest awhile or to set for herself another goal and challenge by expanding her business. Thus for Joan and Alice the need for continual challenge and change in work is an important factor.

4. Finding Satisfaction in Helping Others:

Seven of the 11 women who value the work they do found satisfaction in helping, understanding or being appreciated by others. Joan values that people appreciate the work she does for them, that she feels welcome in their homes and that they often show her their appreciation with gifts. She is pleased to be able to use her knowledge about housing, mortgages, etc. to help buyers who don't have that knowledge. Beret found satisfaction in helping the students she taught for 24 years – having an impact or making a difference in their lives. She also enjoyed helping first her father and later her husband with farm work, explaining that it made her feel able and useful. Sally's work as a paid homemaker is satisfying to her in that she values that she can help others – it "feels good." Theresa's job, which involves understanding, caring for and helping others in a social service agency, gives her a sense of satisfaction also. She values that she keeps learning

from the people she helps. Christine is pleased to be able to help others (both buyers and other sellers) in her work in real estate. She also values that friends come to her for help with renovation and home maintenance problems, knowing that she has specialized knowledge in this area from previous jobs and training. Denise found her 14 years as a secretary in a school her most rewarding job in that it provided her with an opportunity to learn about the problems of youth and to help them. Elizabeth's previous career in nursing was in part satisfying to her because it legitimized her role as caring and helpful and was compatible with her religious ideal of self-sacrifice. Thus helping others is enjoyed not just because it is satisfying to give to others. Related to it is being appreciated by others, having one's knowledge and skills recognized, being useful, seeing oneself as able and learning from those that are helped.

Finding Meaning in the Ideals and Goals of the Women's Movement

Eleven of the 13 participants found personal meaning in the ideals or valued the goals of the Women's Movement. Specifically, they believed that women should have equal rights in society and/or should be equally valued and respected for the contributions they make. Nine of the 13 women spoke of the effect the Women's Movement had on them personally. As has already been discussed above, the Women's Movement taught four women (Mary, Marcela, Christine and Elizabeth) the value of women friends. For seven women (Joan, Jean, Elizabeth, Mary, Christine, Marcela and Denise), the Women's Movement provided them with an analysis that fit their experience. Joan and Jean felt they never did fit the stereotype of the ideal women, and the Women's Movement legitimized who they were – it was okay for Joan to be happy working outside her home and for Jean to be an independent, single woman. For Mary, Christine, and Marcela, the Women's Movement resulted in their awareness of the possibility of a more satisfactory life than they were experiencing in their marriages, and in fact contributed to their separations and eventual divorces. Mary learned that her resentment toward her husband was legitimate, not proof that she was crazy. Christine and Marcela learned they did not have to experience life vicariously through their husbands; they were inspired by the Women's Movement to achieve success in ways they had originally been denied. Elizabeth experiences a sense of peace reading feminist

literature, which talks about women's experience from women's point of view. She is learning to fight for herself and for other women. The Women's Movement has taught Denise to consider her own needs, and to speak out about issues that concern her.

Pressure from the Women's Movement for legal reform had a direct and major impact on Heidi's life. The Alberta Property Act which granted half of the family property to women upon dissolution of marriage, enabled her to leave her marriage without leaving herself destitute. Thus, the legal reform of matrimonial property rights, an isssue fought for by the Women's Movement, had a direct and positive effect on Heidi's life.

For Mary (who values the goals of the Women's Movement) and Madelaine (who feels conflict about the goals of the Women's Movement) the change in opportunities for women to achieve their potential is more of an ideal than a reality. Just as Mary was becoming aware that she might develop herself in a more satisfying way, she became a mother of first one and then two children. Her time and energy are now spent trying to cope with her new responsibilities as a mother. Madelaine admits she has been confused by the changes she has perceived in the role of women over her lifetime. Having once fought against the restrictions she felt as a new wife and mother, she maintains that she is now content with her life at home. However, there is evidence (in that she seems not to value herself very highly) that her satisfaction is with what she perceives to be the potential for women to be fulfilled rather than with the reality of her present situation.

All of the participants (including Alice, who does not identify with the goals of the Women's Movement, but who has relinquished her white-picket-fence fantasy and established herself in an independent life and career) have in some way taken action on behalf of themselves and/or other women. Christine, Marcela, and Elizabeth are actively involved in feminist organizations whose goals are to pressure for social change and support women's issues. Beret is actively involved in traditional women's organizations which historically have supported women's issues. Jean has worked on a project to determine the extent of sexist language in children's literature. People can tell she's a feminist, she maintains, because she takes herself seriously. Theresa and Denise have informally organized women in their community or place of work to press for change

that will benifit women. Both women are prepared to speak out on behalf of themselves or other women when they perceive an injustice. Mary will speak out in defense of women when she hears a sexist remark. She and Madelaine both try to give support to women at home with children. Joan revealed that she has frequent arguments about women's rights and women's liberation. She has made positive changes in her life to her own satisfaction, and defends the right of other women to do the same. Sally and Heidi too, having struggled in their own lives to make changes on their own behalf, defend the right of other women to make choices for themselves.

It is generally held by those working in the Women's Movement, that changes in society toward equal rights for and equal valuing of women will have a positive effect on the lives of men and children, as well as women. Three of the women, Elizabeth, Marcela and Joan, referred to this concept. Elizabeth stated that when women start valuing themselves, men will have to change. Marcela spoke about merging feminist and socialist issues and building small communities based on both ideals. Joan stated that men, too, deserved a choice in how to live their lives, and concluded that when women are happier, everyone will be happier.

C. The Negative Meanings of Being a Woman

Some negative meanings of being a woman have been experienced by all of the 13 women interviewed. Further, for all of the women, these negative meanings have had a major impact on their lives. Six general categories of negative meanings will be discussed in the following order:

1. Experiencing the Female Body as a Burden
2. Struggling Against the Effects of Physical, Sexual, and Psychological Abuse in the Family
3. Being Vulnerable to the Risk of Sexual Harassment or Assault in the Community
4. Being Frustrated and in Conflict in the Roles of Wife and Mother
5. Experiencing a Double Standard with regards to Education and Career
6. Experiencing Sexist Attitudes and Discriminatory Practices in the Community Generally

Experiencing the Female Body as a Burden

Being a woman has meant living inside a sometimes burdensome female body for eight of the 13 participants. For Jean and Joan this burden involves their experience of premenstrual tension, pain, and emotional cycling. This was a prominent concern for Jean because she was experiencing premenstrual tension and emotional vulnerability at the time of the interview. She described that she felt "crummy" and "miserable," explaining that her physical discomfort intruded into her consciousness and "filtered" her experience, as would basic discomforts such as hunger and fatigue. Further, she resents the intrusion.

Joan has experienced extremely severe cramps and vomiting during menstruation since adolescence. Her early feelings about becoming a woman were centered around the pain she had to suffer, in conjunction with the embarrassment she felt at being an "early developer." While she secretly felt proud to be growing up, being teased by her male classmates made puberty an embarrassing time of life. Fear of becoming pregnant and actually having a baby also was a concern for Joan, especially because her mother gave her little information about menstruation or sexuality. She describes her early fear of sexual activity as follows: "I'm sure I wore iron panties." Joan dislikes the emotional cycling she currently experiences as part of her menstrual cycling. She explains: "I get overly emotional and overly critical of myself ... "I get really uptight and really emotional and impatient. Like I just ache!" Knowing that the changes in her body and feeling state are premenstrual symptoms and being able to predict them has helped Joan to cope with her emotional cycling and physical discomfort.

Like Joan, Mary was also unprepared for menstruation, having received no prior information about it from her mother or anyone else. She was "upset," "ashamed," and "repelled" by the experience and it seemed to reinforce her tendency to be timid and withdrawn. Mary explained that she continued throughout adolescence to be worried and embarrassed about menstruating and that she still experiences some embarrassment about it today. These self-conscious feelings about her body concern her insofar as she hopes she won't pass on her feelings to her own daughter, who seems to her to be "such a free spirit."

Marcela can't remember when she began to menstruate and in fact recalls little of her adolescence. She explained the traumatic emotional difficulties she had with her parents at this time and concluded: "Puberty must have been horribly painful times because it's just a block." For years Marcela has experienced severe dysmenorrhea in the form of irregular periods, cramps and migraine headaches. However, unlike Joan she does not seem to accept that her symptoms are physiologically and/or hormonally based. Instead she tends to judge herself as being weak when she becomes ill. Emotional cycling also appears to be a problem to Marcela. Although she does seem to make the connection between emotional cycling and her menstrual cycle, she still judges herself as being out of control at these times.

Menstruation has been a painful experience for Christine since puberty. Like Joan and Mary, she was unprepared for the initial event. However, when she began menstruating her mother reacted matter-of-factly and Christine felt happy to be growing up. Her mother gave her no additional information, however, so she learned from books the connection between menstruation and pregnancy. In her adult life Christine experienced severe discomfort during menstruation, and recurring bladder and kidney infections during and after her pregnancies - infections that appeared with the onset of menstruation. Having suffered kidney damage and having been advised by her doctor not to have more children, Christine agreed to have a hysterectomy. The surgery was a traumatic experience due to complications, a long period of recuperation, continued infections, and the need for further surgery. Christine feels that the final surgery was beneficial, although it took several years for her to fully recover. She no longer suffers from infections and poor health and the dicomforts of dysmenorrhea. However, even though she does not menstruate, she continues to experience an emotional cycle related to monthly hormonal changes. At these times she needs more sleep and feels less ambitious than usual. Understanding what is happening physiologically helps her to cope with these changes, as is the case with Joan.

Neither Elizabeth nor Theresa mentioned emotional cycling in conjunction with menstruation as problematic. However, both women experienced physiologically-based "female problems" severe enough to affect their health and result in surgery. Elizabeth's problem began in her late twenties and involved heavy bleeding during menstruation

resulting in constant anemia due to loss of iron. It was finally determined that she had some endometriosis (fibroid changes in the uterus). The problem was treated in various ways by various doctors, with various results, as will be discussed in the following chapter. Eventually Elizabeth underwent a hysterectomy as a solution to the problem, having decided previously that she did not want children of her own. The hysterectomy did solve the problem of loss of blood and iron. However, the physiological and resulting hormonal change compounded her already severe depression. How various doctors reacted to the emotional repercussions of surgery experienced by Elizabeth will also be discussed in the following chapter. Suffice it to say here that none of their attitudes or explanations fit Elizabeth's experience.

Theresa's medical problems involved being unable to have children, a big disappointment to her and to her husband. She underwent two tubal pregnancies and finally had a hysterectomy to remove her dysfunctional fallopian tubes. As problematic for Theresa as her physiological problems, however, was the attitude and behaviour of various male doctors. It took Theresa 18 months to recover from her surgery and to adjust to the hormonal changes in her body – an adjustment that her doctors failed to understand and viewed as "only" psychological. Theresa's experience with doctors is discussed at greater length in the chapter that follows.

Whereas Theresa experienced not being able to have children as a problem, Mary experienced the consequence of pregnancy and her fear of this consequence as problematic. At the time of the interview, she had already experienced two unplanned pregnancies and her fear of becoming pregnant again was interfering with her desire for sexual intimacy. Six months later (at the time of the follow-up questionnaire) her husband had had a vasectomy as he had earlier promised, and Mary's being sexually inactive was no longer an issue between them. Christine had planned to have only two children, aware that was all she could cope with emotionally. When she became pregnant for the third time, when her last baby was only three months old, she in desperation attempted to abort herself. She could not approach her doctor because she feared that she would be judged and that he would not want to help her. Her body was a burden to her in so far as she felt that others had control over it.

Alice perceives that the responsibility for birth control falls generally to women, and that this is a burden of being female. She deplores the plight of young women experiencing unwanted pregnancies who are often neglected and suffering. The larger issue of why safe birth control methods have not advanced significantly was not spoken to, however.

Experiencing their bodies (and to varying degrees themselves) as unacceptable because they did not fit the ideal image of femininity or the standards of their peer group was a negative experience for five of the 13 participants. For three women (Beret, Jean and Mary) this experience seems to have been major. For two women (Joan and Alice) this experience seems to have had less impact. Because the women were affected more by being judged according to a social standard than by their bodies per se, this experience will be discussed in the following chapter under the section, "Individual Factors and Meaning."

Struggling Against the Effects of Physical, Sexual and Psychological Abuse in the Family

Being a woman has been primarily a struggle for four of the 13 women (Christine, Elizabeth, Sally and Heidi) because of their experiences in their families. Christine and Elizabeth, as eldest daughters in large families, were expected to assume adult responsibilities of caring for their younger siblings and maintaining their homes, received inadequate nurturing from their parents, and were sexually abused by their fathers. Christine felt powerless to change her family situation and Elizabeth felt herself to be "ruined" or stigmatized by her father's abuse. Both women were severely depressed as young adults. Experiencing their marriages as unsatisfactory and as adding to their depressions, both underwent extended psychotherapy, both were divorced, and both have now created new lives for themselves which meet their own needs. Life for them, however, has been largely a struggle. The present struggle for Christine is to build a career and to look after herself and her children. Being a single parent has its own difficulties. Further, since she was never encouraged as a child to reach her potential, she has to remind herself during difficult times that she is capable and can be successful. Other independent women, and the Women's Movement generally are a support to her in this struggle.

Elizabeth's problems were compounded by the effect of her Vietnam War experience, her marriage, and her hysterectomy. The psychiatrists she went to for help became something of a destructive force in her life. They reinforced her feelings of being a "ruined" person with their pronouncements that her incest experience was either her fault or her fantasy. The reasons for her depression were never taken seriously and she was varyingly diagnosed as schizophrenic or manic-depressive, and treated with drugs and shock-therapy. Elizabeth attempted suicide on more than one occasion, viewing her action as the only way to stop the pain she was feeling. After several years of therapy and hard work, she eventually put her life back together. The Rape Crisis Center has been a positive and supportive influence in that she learned there that she was a "victim" of incest - that "it was not my fault." Elizabeth's current struggle reflects her childhood struggle: she experiences much conflict about taking care of herself versus giving to others. In addition, she feels at odds with the dominant social attitudes of aggression, competition and material gain. She no longer feels "crazy" however, finding support from individual women friends, from feminist literature and from the Women's Movement generally. She is especially involved with work at the Rape Crisis Center, now called the Sexual Abuse Center.

Sally's life has been hard for most of her young life. As a young child, she felt abandoned by her mother who left her for several years to live with her grandmother and other relatives. Sally's feelings of abandonment and anger were never resolved and she continues to mistrust and resent her mother and to feel guilty about these feelings. Struggling and losing against a school system which refused to take seriously her sexual harassment by her teacher, Sally dropped out of school in grade eight. She got pregnant, was married and became a mother at age 15. Sally's marriage was also a struggle in that her husband was often away working and when he came home he continually abused and beat her. Sally stayed in the marriage for some time, aware that her young husband had not been ready to settle down and believing she must try to make her marriage a success. However, she resented the violence and disrespect and alternately blamed herself or her husband for getting married in the first place. Eventually Sally reasoned that she alone could not make the marriage work and she left her husband and filed for divorce. They reconciled and he changed his behavior, but

within a few months he was killed in a car accident. Sally became a widow at age 18. Sally continues to struggle today as a single parent. Having little education, she is forced to accept a low-paying, part-time job (which she nevertheless enjoys) and survives on very little money. Her struggle is made more difficult by her mother's judgments and interference in her life, her ex-boyfriend's refusal to leave her alone, and by her own inability to assert herself for fear of hurting them (a problem she shares with many women). Out of desperation, she once considered giving up her child for adoption, and twice attempted suicide. She is supported in her struggle today by several women friends, some of whom are in similar situations.

Heidi's struggle was in her marriage of 26 years with a husband who treated her as a "slave" and "workhorse," who constantly abused her, beat her and eventually threatened to kill her. Struggling to maintain her sanity and a "normal" family life, she put up with his abuse because as an immigrant she did not know about her civil rights or about the welfare system as an alternative and she had no family or friends to turn to. Further, she wanted to provide her children with the education she never had (a possibility only if she remained in the marriage), feared the difficulties she would face raising three children on her own, and also feared being judged by her children for depriving them of their father. Prior to leaving her husband, she was living in constant fear for her life and was so stressed that she could not eat or sleep. She first understood that the possibility existed for her to live independently from her husband when the Alberta Property Act came into being in 1979. This act legalized her share in the rental properties which her husband had insisted were totally his. Heidi made the final decision to divorce her husband when she learned he had been raping their youngest daughter for many years. She felt support in her struggle from the professionals to whom she turned (a lawyer and a doctor), from one particular landlady who found her a place to live, from her boss at work and from her daughter. Her ex-husband still harasses her and she finds this extremely stressful. (At the time of the first interview she was glad to have the interviewer present because her husband had thrown a brick through her front-room window on the previous night and she was frightened to be alone.) In spite of this, Heidi is hopeful about her future. She is working as a house cleaner until she can pay off her lawyer's fees, and feels supported

by the people she works for and by her friends and children. Heidi is glad that she was strong enough to survive her marriage and believes that the love and security she felt as a child helped her to withstand her husband's abuses.

Other participants, though not themselves victims of abuse by their fathers and husbands, were aware of this among other women. Denise has a sister who was beaten by her husband and whom she feels was trapped into staying in the marriage because she had too many children to support on her own. She deplores this kind of abuse that women suffer. They must not be blamed for leaving their marriages, she maintains, because they "never vowed at the alter to live with abuse" and because they "deserve to be treated with respect." Madelaine, Theresa and Beret are also aware of women who were beaten by their husbands: Madelaine knew this to be true of her grandmother, Theresa of her great-grandmother and Beret of a neighbor. Thus of the 13 women interviewed, two women were sexually abused by their fathers, two were beaten by their husbands (and one of these husbands also sexually abused a daughter), and four women knew of other women who had been abused by their husbands.

Being Vulnerable to the Risk of Sexual Harassment or Assault in the Community

Another negative aspect of being a woman is the risk of sexual harassment or assault by men outside the family: being perceived and treated as legitimate targets for men's sexual advances when in fact they are unwanted and inappropriate and result in the woman feeling threatened or violated. Seven of the 13 participants spoke of incidents of sexual harassment or assault that they have personally experienced. Sally was the victim of sexual harassment by one of her teachers when she was a student in junior high school. She complained to the school principal about the teacher's behavior but was told to just ignore it. Unable to tolerate the harassment any longer, she left the school in anger and refused to return. The principal tried to convince her to return and finally expelled her. Mary spoke of her early experiences with men in high school and college when all the men "wanted one thing." Most of them were "mashers," she concludes – men who were "always wanting to screw me." This attitude on the part of men left her feeling "tainted." She explains how the men's behavior affected her: "They'd come up and grab my boobs and I just couldn't cope at all."

Joan has experienced a mild form of sexual harassment by her clients, who incorrectly assume she is interested in a sexual encounter. She is sometimes annoyed by her clients' assumptions but not to the extent that it interferes with her work. Theresa refers to the "risks" of being a woman – being seen as "fair game" – an aspect she dislikes and finds threatening. She described incidents in which she was sexually assaulted, once by a so-called friend and once by a deliveryman, recounting her feelings of disbelief, anger, disgust and fear. She also recounts stories told to her by women living on their own who must constantly guard against unwanted sexual advances by men. Theresa's general sense of safety has been affected by her own experiences and by her knowledge of what has happened to other women. She no longer stops on the highway for someone who appears to be in trouble, and keeps her car doors locked.

Elizabeth speaks of her growing awareness of the "physical danger of being a woman." She is increasingly concerned that she could be sexually assaulted on the street or in her home and resents having to always be cautious. Other women too, she has noticed, are more fearful of being assaulted. In addition to becoming more aware of an increased potential for sexual assault, Elizabeth has come to realize that she has been sexually assaulted in the past in ways that seem to her to be condoned by professionals. Her sexual involvement with a male psychologist in a group encounter seems to her to parallel her incest experience – she was vulnerable and perceived him as powerful but irresponsible – as her father had been. At the time, she expected nothing more from men in authority – various male psychiatrists had already convinced her that men were guilt free and she was to blame. Elizabeth once held a similar attitude toward the doctors in Vietnam who sexually harassed the nurses. At the time, she considered the doctors' behavior as "par for the course"; now she wonders how much of the depression and anxiety she experienced there could be attributed to sexual harassment and the repercussions for refusing to "play along." As Elizabeth begins to speak out at work about her concern that women are being sexually assaulted and harassed, she is finding that both men and women often blame women, i.e., "blame the victim."

Like Elizabeth, Marcela is aware of women's particular vulnerability because they are perceived as sex objects. She is especially concerned about sexual harassment at work places, which she sees as attempts by men to "terrorize" women and "keep them

in their place." The consequences are devastating both psychologically and financially, she maintains. Ironically, Marcela herself became a victim of sexual harassment at her place of work (it was learned from the follow-up interview) in which she was working for the rights of union women to be free of sexual harassment in their workplace. She sought legal advice in an attempt to defend her work and, although she eventually lost her job, she won a financial settlement. Christine was the victim of sexual assault by a male psychiatrist from whom she was seeking professional help. She was upset about what happened and angry that he would take advantage of a patient who was emotionally vulnerable. She wishes now that she had reported him but understands that at the time she saw it as one more hassle to cope with.

Being Frustrated and in Conflict in the Roles of Wife and Mother

Of the six women currently married, three had experienced and/or were presently experiencing their roles as wives and mothers as frustrating or unfair. More specifically, they were resentful or in conflict with the expectation that as wives or mothers they are *naturally* responsible for certain jobs in the home or that their activities outside of the home *should be* restricted for the good of their husbands and/or children. For Joan, this is a major issue. She experiences what she terms a "double standard" in her marriage insofar as she experiences that her husband has more freedom in the community than she does and has society's sanction to put himself first. She, on the other hand, feels restricted in the community and obligated to think of her family first. When she has made attempts to act for herself, she has felt guilty, has had to act without the support of her husband and has had to withstand ridicule and criticism from her husband and his friends. She believes that her husband expects to have more freedom because he is a man, and also that she learned as a child to expect to have less freedom because she was a woman. Joan also experiences a double standard in that her husband assumes he is "the boss" and is in charge of making decisions for the entire family. Further, she experiences that he feels threatened by the amount of money she makes and that he fears her financial independence. Joan resents this competitive aspect of their relationship, desiring instead an equal partnership based on cooperation and support.

In the early years of her marriage Joan was frustrated and in conflict with her role as mother. She felt a victim of the attitude that women *should* stay home with their children because their husband and society *expect* it and children are *supposed to be* better off with their natural mothers. She agreed to stay home, therefore, because it seemed the *right* thing to do, and all of her friends were doing it too. Thus Joan's full time career as homemaker was defined for her on the basis of sex, and on the assumption that women are *naturally* interested in and good at nurturing their children on a full-time basis. The result of Joan attempting to fit this role was that she eventually became severely depressed. Fortunately she sought help from a sympathetic doctor who understood what was wrong and advised her to get out of the house and go to work. In spite of this, she still wonders about her performance in the role of mother, jokes about her lack of a "maternal instinct" and worries that she maybe isn't doing something for her children that she's *supposed to do*.

Madelaine, like Joan, has also been frustrated in her marriage in the roles of wife and mother. In her early married life, she felt "caged" by a possessive husband, resented being tied at home with children and was frustrated in her attempts to feel "free" and "independent." She survived this stage of her marriage by fighting her husband's expectations. Today she is accomodating to her husband's desire that she focus her energy on her children and himself. She has decided to put her own needs last, hoping this will help him become more secure — that he will be less threatened and therefore less tense and critical — and that as a result the family atmosphere will be more positive for everyone. Although Madelaine maintains she is satisfied with this solution and is content with her situation, there is evidence that she doesn't value herself highly and that she finds little in her life that is meaningful. She became conscious of this during the interview, as we can see by her following remarks: ."..when I really try to think what is meaningful to me, a lot, there's not all that much for me," and "I have this feeling that I'm not able to do it" (achieve something for myself), and "I guess I don't have a very big price tag on myself."

At present, Madelaine experiences the changes in role expectations of women as confusing. As a child, she witnessed women being treated as "servants" or "slaves" — where "the man thought he had complete control over her." Friendships between women

and men did not exist. She has since learned to be friends with men and she values this. Her husband is one of her friends. She is less certain about her role as a mother, however, and she experienced being a mother to her first child as more of a burden than a joy. She admits that even today, although she cares for her children, she doesn't feel the love for them that she thinks she's *supposed to* feel. This is understandable, knowing that Madelaine was a middle child in a large family of 13 children, who never witnessed or experienced much warmth or affection. It is a difficult feeling for her to resolve, however, in a society which sanctifies maternal love, believing women to be *naturally* loving and nurturing toward their children. While Madelaine concludes that she can only do her best—that she can't force herself to feel what society says she *should* feel — she sometimes dreams of how different it might be.

The frustration Mary experiences in her marriage centers around the assumption that it is she who is ultimately responsible for child care, household maintenance and the mental health of the whole family – she being a woman and this work somehow *belonging* to women. It is not that she resents having to sacrifice her career as an editor per se; she is pleased, in fact, to drop it for awhile and explore her first love, which is art. Rather, she resents the assumption of her husband, supported by society, that she alone, by virtue of being a wife and mother, must be the person to sacrifice her career "for the good of the family." She also resents that she alone must handle the consequences of being emotionally exhausted, responsible for two young children 24 hours a day, of being physically tied to the house, of being isolated from other adults in her work and of being financially dependent. Her conflict centers around wanting to do the best thing for her children and still needing to develop her own potential in some way. She perceives that her options are limited by lack of funds for help in her home, lack of quality child care facilities in her community, lack of assistance from a husband involved in his own career and lack of assistance from family who live in another country. Therefore, the alternatives for Mary are limited insofar as she is left with major responsibility for child care and household maintenance, and little free time to develop her own interests. Mary chooses to go along with the current breakdown of responsibilities in her home, fearing the possibility of a second marriage breakdown and bolstered by the knowledge that, above all else, she values her children and husband.

She no longer blames herself personally for not being able to cope with her responsibilities at home and in addition handle an outside career. Rather, she sees her situation as the fate of women; she feels "caught by biology" – trapped in the roles of mother and wife, and unable to be a person or even a woman first. That she was resentful and depressed was obvious, both to herself and to the interviewer.

Of the seven women married previously, six experienced these marriages negatively and found themselves frustrated, resentful, or trapped in the roles of wife and mother. That Sally and Heidi were physically and mentally abused by their husbands has already been discussed. As was explained above, both women adapted themselves to the abuse for specific reasons – Sally for a relatively short time and Heidi for a much longer time. Sally and Heidi also experienced conflict in relation to their children. Sally's husband repeatedly beat her and called her names in front of their daughter, undermining Sally's authority and her daughter's respect for her. This made Sally's relationship with her daughter very difficult, both while her husband lived and after he was killed. She at one point felt so powerless in the role of mother that she seriously considered giving up her daughter for adoption. The conflict Heidi experienced as a mother was not with her children but involved them, in that she worried about whether to leave her husband and deprive her children of their father or to stay in an abusive marriage so that her children could be with their father and receive the benefit of an education. For many years the ideology which supported the family staying together took precedence over the reality of Heidi's life.

Christine, Marcela, Elizabeth and Mary also experienced frustration and conflict in their earlier marriages. For these women, however, this is only one of a number of negative aspects to being a woman, the effects of which are mostly resolved. The major issue for these women, one which eventually led to marriage breakdown, was that as wives they were expected to gain an identity through their husbands. How this expectation was manifest in their marriages was described clearly by each woman. For Christine, it involved working at part-time jobs to put her husband through school and making a full-time career of being a "perfect housewife and mother" – work which supported his development, not her own. She tried being "Superwoman" she explained, but didn't find it satisfying, and couldn't relate to her isolated life in the suburbs or the

women who, like herself, were expected to be "extensions of their husbands." Eventually she left her marriage. Motherhood also proved to be a problem for Christine in the early years. She was still suffering from her own abuse as a child, was still her mother's protector, maintained the household while working at a paid job part-time to put her husband through school and was constantly ill. Being a mother was just one more burden, certainly not the satisfying career it was *supposed to be*.

Marcela explains that she married her husband to avoid being alone and as a means to finding "meaning" in her life, her ultimate goal. Further, she reasoned that marrying an intellectual man would provide an opportunity to experience an intellectual life. However, when she discovered that she, herself, could be a successful academic (she obtained scholarships to do research at Harvard and in Europe and was invited to present papers at various conferences), and that her intellectual husband lacked emotional honesty, the dream world fell apart. Marcela left her husband and became seriously involved in writing and doctoral studies. She was later divorced.

Elizabeth believes that she married because she was 30 years old and felt a pressure to get married. She realizes now that although she respected this man she did not love him. She realizes too that he provided her with an escape from the world of nursing and from a master's thesis she didn't want to finish – marriage was a chance for a new beginning. However, having not yet recovered from her Vietnam War experience, she was not ready to meet the emotional demands of marriage. Further, she could not relate to her husband's anxieties about being a successful academic, which to her seemed trivial. In conjunction with this, she could not obtain satisfactory psychiatric help for her depression, which had become more severe after her hysterectomy. The marriage disintegrated. Elizabeth was finally admitted to a mental hospital at her own insistence, and later obtained a divorce.

Like Marcela, Mary thought that her marriage to her first husband would bring her an intellectually stimulating life in academia. And like Elizabeth, she is aware that she used marriage as a way to avoid an unsatisfactory career – a career in teaching. She describes how the marriage became immediately less than ideal when she discovered on her honeymoon that her husband had what seemed to her to be a calculated and kinky attitude towards sex. Mary felt used. Another problem for Mary was what she

experienced as her husband's expectation that she be dependent on him – that she be his "Baby." She perceived that when she began to develop her own ideas and a sense of independence, he felt threatened and became even more controlling. He insisted she was crazy because she didn't want sex with him, and sent her to a psychiatrist. Mary did enter therapy but she also became involved with another man, left her husband and later divorced him.

Experiencing Sexist Attitudes and Discriminatory Practises in Relation to Education and Career

Being limited or disadvantaged by sexist attitudes or discriminatory practices in relation to careers and education was experienced by 10 of the 13 participants. For Joan this is a major source of frustration. She perceives what she again terms a "double standard" in the business world – a discrimination which women encounter when they try to advance in their career or enter a career stereotypically considered male. She first experienced this when she began a ceramic tile installation business and discovered that people thought she was incapable of doing the job or that it was an inappropriate career for a woman. In her current career in real estate she is aware that whereas clients feel fine about buying their homes from women, in commercial real estate they still prefer to "do business" with men. Clients believe, she thinks, that men know more about big buildings or are more capable of handling large sums of money, simply by virtue of being men. This attitude frustrates her and inhibits her from moving into commercial real estate. Joan believes that she would also be discriminated against (on the basis of sex) if she were to pursue a career as a building contractor. She expects that she would have trouble borrowing money from a bank to get started, because it would be assumed that she is incapable of handling the job. She, on the other hand, thinks that she would be an especially good builder of homes because she understands what women want in homes. However, she believes that men feel protective of this domain, and that they want women to think that jobs that men have traditionally worked at in our culture are too hard for women. She further believes that by keeping the knowledge to themselves, men also keep the benefits to themselves – benefits such as money, status and power.

As regards her education, Joan described how she was channeled into business college for secretarial training after grade ten because a government bursury was made

available to her for such training. She did not appear to be aware, or at least made no comment on the issue at the time of the interview, that financial assistance for this particular training was discriminatory, because only young *women* received assistance for secretarial school. Joan spoke only about the fact that her family did not have enough money to send her to university, implying that she was lucky to be assisted with any kind of training that would help her gain her independence. Madelaine was assisted with similar training as a young woman and, like Joan, seemed unaware of the discrimination underlying the policy for financial assistance. She, too, was glad for the chance to gain her independence in whatever way was open to her. It seems likely that both women were, in fact, lucky to have financial assistance which enabled them to gain skills for a job. The problem is with the kind of training that was made available to them. That neither women found secretarial work particularly satisfying is evidenced by the fact that neither stayed with it for long nor do they desire to pursue it again. Their interests are in very different areas.

The fact that neither Joan nor Madelaine was encouraged by her family to gain an education and/or develop her potential, and/or be strong and independent, reflects an assumption that girls do not need to find a place for themselves in the career world. Christine talks about this being the assumption in her family and community. In her words:

> I don't think I was very well prepared in my childhood for what I was to meet later on in my life. Basically, I was just prepared to grow up and be somebody's wife. I wasn't given any encouragement to get a good education and I didn't have things in my life to stimulate any thoughts about what I could do with my life. I just assumed that what I would do is grow up and be married. So that's what I did.

When Sally was permitted to drop out of school in grade eight, this was also one of the assumptions operating in her family and community. She does not speak of the assumption, only wonders what her life would have been like if she had stayed in school.

For Mary, Marcela, Alice and Elizabeth, the issue was not one of getting an education but of getting an education which suited their personalities and developed their talents. Whereas Beret chose a traditionally female career (teaching) the choice was not problematic because it suited her personality and met her needs. Beret, in fact, taught school for 24 years and experienced much distress upon her retirement. However, original career choices (all stereotypically appropriate) were problematic for Elizabeth,

Mary, Marcela, Alice and Jean, because they did not fit their personalities and interests. Elizabeth, while experiencing general university courses as highly stimulating and feeling at home in nursing insofar as it allowed her to take care of others in a professional role, found other aspects of nursing to be unsatisfactory. As a nursing student she was disappointed, finding the practicum aspects of her nursing training much less stimulating than the theoretical courses she took. And as a nurse she was frustrated by the condescending attitude of male doctors and the limitation of her role as one who does not question but only follows orders. Eventually she left her profession.

Mary decided to go into teaching because her mother and grandparents approved – teaching was a "respectable" and "secure" career for a girl and was what her mother wanted her to be. Mary struggled through education courses at university despite her disinterest in them, and relegated her newly-discovered interest in art to a leisure activity. Uninvolved in her studies, university became for Mary a place to find a man. Teaching became, for one year, a means to a job that would enable her to be close to the man she loved. When she married him, she left teaching. Similarly, Alice chose teaching home economics as her career because it was an acceptable career for a woman – a "safe" and "feminine" choice. She, too, became more involved with the social aspects of university life than with her studies. She taught for several years but was not satisfied. Other jobs seemed to not be important and she experienced a marked lack of commitment to them, for she was always waiting for the right man to come along. Then she would get married and settle down and life would really begin. The sexist attitude which assumes it is unnecessary for a woman to be serious about her education or a career because she will eventually marry anyway had become a part of Alice's self-concept. It took her until age 30 to realize she could make a life and career for herself that did not depend on her relationship to a man, and to discover the commitment to a career that she had for so long lacked.

Marcela always wanted both a career and a marriage. Wanting a career that was creative and artistic, she entered a modelling and fashion school – something "*acceptable* for a girl to do." When she learned that the common goal there was to find an appropriate (i.e., rich) husband, she left and entered university. She did not expect to do well herself, but assumed she would be involved with male intellectuals and could at least

vicariously experience an intellectual life, "through osmosis" she thought. She could not herself be a Philosopher King, but she might marry one. Thus, when she married, her husband became in part a means by which to experience academic success. Women were too emotional, she thought, to achieve in academia where one was required to be strictly rational. However, she began to realize that she could achieve academically, and that her husband's extreme rationality was "false and empty." As her assumptions about male/female differences became shaky, so did her marriage. After they separated she began to take her studies seriously, to speak out in class, teach courses, publish papers, travel to other universities, win scholarships, and establish a reputation in her field. In spite of her academic success, however, Marcela remains very insecure about her abilities. She believes deep down that the assumption that the male mind is superior and that men are more intelligent and rational (a belief supported by the fact that her discipline has an all male faculty) is correct. She has also internalized the sexist idea that her emotional life is particular to females and a sign of weakness, and therefore must be kept under strict control. Consequently, she fears her emotions and works hard to control them in order, she believes, to maintain her rationality. As a result she is highly anxious.

The problems of being female were complicated for Jean by her family's economic situation. When she graduated from high school at age 16, she perceived that she could not stay home since her work on the family farm was not considered as valuable as her brothers' work and she knew that she could not be "kept" because there was not enough money. Nor could her family afford to send her to university. She saw as her options, either becoming financially dependent on a husband (her father wanted her to marry eventually but she wasn't sure she wanted to be married, and besides, no one had asked her) or to go out to work and support herself (her mother assumed she would do this – it was what she had done and Jean was, after all, capable). Jean left home and found a job in a bank – a job that was low-paying and offered no chance for advancement for women. She describes how she eventually became bored and decided to find a more interesting and promising career. She knew that teaching and nursing were acceptable careers for women but was interested in neither, so she interviewed for entrance to a program in metereological technology – an interest stimulated by her

father. However, Jean was told after the interviews that women were not suitable candidates for the program – her second encounter with institutionalized discrimination. A friend advised her that her best alternative was to go to university, so she did, still not knowing what she would eventually work at. While there, a student counsellor told Jean to pursue a career in teaching. Although she experienced the counsellor as supportive, it appears that he reinforced the stereotypic feminine behaviors of passivity and dependence, already a problem for Jean, by assuming an authoritative role and giving her advice. It took less than a year of teaching for Jean to decide this was the wrong career for her, and several more years for her to convince her counsellor and herself that she should try something else.

Experiencing Sexist Attitudes and Discriminatory Practices in the Community Generally

Sexist attitudes and discriminatory practices experienced outside of the family and apart from the realm of career and education were also perceived as negative aspects of being women. Being restricted in their activities because they are female, or being assumed to be unfeminine if they are active was described by eight of the 13 participants as a negative experience. Joan and Beret both spoke of themselves as having been "tomboys" when they were small – they preferred to play actively outdoors. The assumption underlying the label "tomboy" is that girls who are physically active and like to play outdoors are behaving like boys. Joan remembers that her mother used to push her to play with "girls' toys" and frequently told her she should have been a boy. Beret felt that her mother preferred Beret's more "feminine" sister who was accomplished at needlework and other quiet, indoor activities. Joan and Beret did not mind being tomboys; they were enjoying themselves. They have thought of themselves as "different," however, and Beret did feel rejected by her mother for this difference.

Today Joan is often annoyed and hurt by sexist attitudes on the part of friends and relatives of her husband, who put her down and make fun of her because she speaks her mind and acts independently. Although she feels attacked, Joan doesn't put up with the treatment she experiences and argues with these men about the validity of her position. Beret suffers today too, but not from criticism by others for being active or outspoken. Her suffering comes from her own judgment of herself because she

does not fit the stereotyped image of the small and dainty woman. Being a big, tall person with large hands, she experiences herself as not looking feminine. Although the sense of inadequacy that Beret experiences as a result of being big does not impinge on her life goals (i.e., it has not prevented her from pursuing a career, from becoming intimately involved with her husband, family and friends, or from being active in her community), it is manifest in her own sense of self-worth. She spoke of disliking her size and shape both in answer to the question "What do you dislike about yourself?" and "What do you value in yourself?" Also notable is that Beret had difficulty talking about what she valued in herself, being much more comfortable talking about what she admired in her parents or what she values in her life generally. Indicative, too, of her difficulty accepting herself are the tentative words she uses when actually talking about what she does value in herself. For example, she states: "And I think that maybe something that I think is alright with myself is that I don't mind working."

The attitude that most affects Jean and Alice is that they *should* get married, the implication being that they are failures as women because they are single. In both cases, it is their aunts who make these judgments, perhaps because it is on family occasions that Jean's and Alice's single status stands out, and because female relatives seem to believe it is their *place* to make judgments about their own family members - family is their business. Alice also experiences as a burden the expectation that she *should* like children, because she doesn't like them particularly. She recognizes, too, that being expected to cook and play hostess is a burden for some women (her sister-in-law, for example) though she herself enjoys this activity. Luckily for Alice, she has largely resolved her own feelings about not being married and so is only temporarily affected by the judgment she experiences. Jean, on the other hand, is extremely affected by the judgments of her aunts, believing deep down that she is a failure as a woman because she is not lovable. She is so deeply affected by this judgment that she wishes she were a man, believing that a man's life would be easier to cope with, since he has only to achieve in his career to be successful.

Denise dislikes the attitude which claims that women are less capable than men. She has noticed that while some men give lip service to women's equality, their behavior indicates that they don't really listen to, believe or respect women. She has recognized

this attitude as "male chauvinism" only in the past 10 years, however. Prior to that, she wasn't aware it existed, having assumed that men respected women the way her father did. However, she recalls her mother exclaiming to her "It's a man's world!" and she understands why this was an accurate account of her mother's experience as a woman. Tied to her work at home, caring for 10 children, Denise's mother had little opportunity to socialize. Her opinions were not respected in political discussions. Yet she was expected by the male doctors and priests, whom she was taught to respect, not only to be responsible for the welfare of her husband and family, but also to sacrifice herself for their benefit. Thus Denise understands the extent to which her mother experienced a double standard. However, she believes that young women's lives have improved considerably since her mother's time.

In spite of the changes that have occured in social attitudes toward and policies affecting women, the experience of being a woman today may for some women resemble Denise's mother's experience. For example, Sally is distressed by the behavior of men which indicates they "think they're better" or "smarter" than women, and a belief that women are "a bunch of dummies" and not worth listening to because they don't know what they're talking about. She notices that men do not listen when women speak, but pay attention to a man saying the same thing. It angers her that women are "put down" and assumed to be ignorant because they are "only a woman."

Theresa, too, is aware of sexist attitudes that affected her both as a child and as an adult. She describes an incident she experienced in school (which she recalled in vivid detail) whereby her teacher criticized the girls, more than the boys, for sliding down a banister. The girls would ruin themselves for their future husbands, he scolded, and this would be a problem for the husbands. Theresa was and still is outraged by the sexist assumptions that (a) she would be ruined by physical activity, and (b) this would be problem not for her but for a future husband. She explained as she described the incident that it still enrages her today – that as she spoke it was as if it had just happened yesterday. Further, she has resolved that if she ever has the opportunity (and she thinks she will), she will confront this teacher with what she considers to be his sexist assumptions and discriminatory behavior. As an adult, Theresa has experienced sexist attitudes from people in her community (both male and female) who criticized her

more than once for doing a "man's job" (driving a school bus, managing her farm) when her husband was ill. She has also experienced a sexist attitude on the part of men in her curling club who refused to take into account the needs and opinions of the women. She recalls that some wives of some of these men sided with their husbands against the women. Theresa has also perceived a sexist attitude in various members of the medical profession who treated her with disrespect, discounted her experience and dismissed her concerns as neurotic. These experiences will be examined more fully in the following chapter. Theresa is also aware of and angered by sexist attitudes affecting other women — women she talks to through her job. She is aware of the detrimental effect on women who work at home, caring for their children and running their households, who see themselves as "just a housewife" because the work they do is not valued in our society. She perceives, too, that women who work in low-paying jobs (secretaries, clerks, waitresses) are assumed both to be dependent on a man and to not be in need of a larger income, and consequently are kept dependent on men of whom they might wish to be free. Further, Theresa has witnessed that women who work for higher pay at jobs considered to be a "man's job" (heavy equipment operators, truck drivers) are judged as unfeminine and are assumed to be sexually interested in or involved with the men with whom they work. She has witnessed, too, that women who have been deserted and prostitute themselves in order to feed and clothe their children are judged to be morally inferior and socially irredeemable. In all cases, the woman's position is not understood. Government policy, Theresa believes, discriminates against women insofar as women who are single parents are expected to assume responsibility for their children and to work for a low wage to support them, whereas men are free to do neither. All of these incidents make Theresa angry. She copes by speaking out and fighting back when the opportunity arises, supported by her knowledge that her strong and independent mother and great-grandmother did the same.

The issue that at the moment is of most concern to Elizabeth is that the men with whom she works don't seem to care that women are being oppressed by sexist attitudes and discriminatory practices. She explains how when she presents statistical evidence to them they typically debate the validity of the statistics, and never react to the issue of the injustice represented by the statistics. She has been shocked to learn

this and vows to keep supporting women's issues.

D. Summary

A phenomenological analysis of the 13 case studies resulted in 12 broad categories of meanings of being a woman – six positive and six negative.

The Positive Meanings of Being a Woman

All of the participants experienced being a woman positively in some way, although each positive meaning may have had a greater or lesser importance to an individual woman.

Being Womanly, Feminine, Sexual, or Desirable

Eleven of the 13 participants felt positive about their "womanhood," "femininity," sexuality or being perceived as desireable or attractive.

Finding Fulfillment in Nurturing Children

Eight of the 13 participants had children and all of these women valued their children. However, only three of the women reported finding satisfaction in the job of nurturing their children. (These women worked outside of their homes in addition to caring for their children). The remaining five woman (three of whom work outside their home) have experienced or are currently experiencing the role of mother as problematic for various reasons.

Being Warm, Caring, Sensitive, Understanding and Helpful

Six of the 13 participants value that they are warm, caring, sensitive and understanding people and enjoy being helpful to others. Three of these women were mothers who also valued nurturing their children, one was a mother who did not feel particularly nurturing toward her chidlren, and two of these women had no children.

Finding Satisfaction in Achieving Relationships

Ten of the 13 participants valued their relationships to their family of origin, although family had different meanings and different degrees of importance for these women. Further, the family members to whom a meaningful connection was made differed from woman to woman. Five of the seven women married or living with a partner value that intimate relationship. Twelve of the 13 women valued

friendships highly. Eight of these 12 women found friendships with women to be of particular importance.

Finding Satisfaction in Work Outside the Home

Eleven of the 13 participants found satisfaction in paid work done outside of their homes. Six women valued that their jobs gave them a sense of independence, security control, freedom or power. Seven women found satisfaction in their work because it demonstrated to them that they were capable. Five women found satisfaction in their work because it was a challenge. Seven women enjoyed their work because they enjoyed helping and being appreciated by others.

Finding Meaning in the Ideals and Goals of the Women's Movement

Twelve of the 13 participants found meaning in or valued the goals of the Women's Movement, i.e., that women should have equal rights in society and be valued equally. Nine women described the positive effect the Women's Movement had on them personally. Three women were active in various aspects of the Movement and three women spoke of how changes in society which benefited women would also benefit men and children.

The Negative Meanings of Being a Woman

All of the 13 participants described negative meanings to being a woman related to experiences which had a major impact on their lives. Whether or not these negative meanings balanced, outweighed or took second place to the positive meanings varied from woman to woman.

Experiencing the Female Body as a Burden

Eight of the 13 participants experienced their female body as sometimes a burden. For five women, dysmenorrhea has been or continues to be problematic. Three women spoke of having been unprepared for menstruation at puberty. Three women have undergone surgery as a result of severe problems involving the female anatomy. One woman experienced not being able to have children as a problem and two women experienced the possibility of an unwanted pregnancy or the responsibility for birth control as a burden. Five women experienced their bodies as unacceptable because they did not fit the ideal image of femininity or

meet the standard of their peer group. For three of the five women this experience has had a major impact on their lives.

Struggling Against the Effects of Physical, Sexual & Psychological Abuse in the Family

Life as a woman has been primarily a struggle for four of the 13 participants because of the abuse they suffered in their families. Two of these women were sexually abused by their fathers and emotionally deprived generally in their families of origin and have spent much of their adulthood recovering from the effect of abuse and deprivation. The other two women were physically and psychologically abused by their husbands (one of these husbands also sexually abused one of his daughters) and are now struggling to create a secure and stable life for themselves. Four other women, in addition, knew of family members or neighbours who had been physically abused by their husbands.

Being Vulnerable to the Risk of Sexual Harassment or Assault in the Community

Seven of the 13 participants described incidents of sexual harassment or assault they had personally experienced and expressed feelings about it ranging from annoyance to resentment to devastation. The women were varyingly harassed or assaulted by a teacher, students, clients, a "friend," a delivery-man, a psychologist, doctors, employers, and a psychiatrist.

Being Frustrated and in Conflict in the Roles of Wife and Mother

Of the six women who are currently married, three experience or have experienced these marriages as frustrating or unfair insofar as they have been expected to take on the restrictive roles of wife and mother. Six women out of seven who were previously married but were now divorced or widowed experienced their marriages as frustrating and resented the expectations placed on them as wives. Three of these women also experienced conflict in the role of mother.

Experiencing Sexist Attitudes and Discriminatory Practises in Relation to Education and Career

Ten of the 13 participants described experiences involving sexist attitudes and/or discriminatory practices in relation to education, career choice, business

practices and institutional structures. In the majority of situtations, the women were not conscious of the sexism or discrimination operating at the time, and only now, in retrospect, understand it.

Experiencing Sexist Attitudes and Discriminatory Practices in the Community Generally

Eight of the 13 participants experienced a variety of sexist attitudes and discriminatory practices relating to the feminine stereotype and their "proper place." They perceived that they were expected to be inactive, dainty in appearance, married, working at home only, not working at "a man's job," and to be satisfied with fewer choices and less pay than men. In addition, they felt they were judged to be less capable and less intelligent than men.

VII. Analysis of the Case Studies: Women's Experience in Context

A. Introduction

Women give meanings to their experience as women through an interactive process, a dialectic between a woman and the circumstances in which she is situated. In order to more fully understand the meanings women attribute to their experiences, it is essential to examine the context of their experience – the dimensions of their realities which affect their experience as women and the meanings they give to this experience. The context of the 13 participant's lives will be discussed as follows:

1. Individual Factors
2. Family Relationships
3. Social Factors
4. Cultural/Political Factors

B. Individual Factors and Meaning

Among the 13 participants, three factors were most important in affecting their experience as women and the meaning they gave to that experience. These three factors will be discussed in the following order:

1. Health
2. Temperament
3. Physical Appearance

Health

Their state of health was a factor affecting their experience of themselves as women for nine of the 13 participants. Beret and Denise spoke of valuing their good health (both physical and mental) and valuing that they are capable of living actively and independently. Denise states the she's "very grateful to have good health" because it means she's able to "do things you want to do" and "do things for myself." Beret feels "lucky" to have good health so that she can "look after yourself and enjoy that part of your life." She finds meaning in the following adage which she quoted: "Don't grumble about growing old; it's a privilege." It is likely that for Denise and Beret, appreciation of their health relates to their age (over 60) and their awareness that other people their age

do have serious health problems. Madelaine and Jean, both women in their 30s, were affected by their awareness of their health problems and perceived physical vulnerability. Madelaine, who was at the time of the interview recovering from a serious back problem, referred to her poor health in answer to the question, "In what ways have you experienced yourself as powerless?" Facing illness or death made her feel powerless, she explained. Jean's concern stems from knowing that she has possibly inherited a tendency toward being overweight and developing arteriosclerosis, a condition which has led to an early death for a number of her relatives. She explains:

> So no, you never really believe that you'll actually die, and I sure would hate to think that I am going to, but God, the percentages are really bad. Often for long periods of time it doesn't bother me much at all. But right now, well I very recently found out that my cousin died and he was 34, which is my age.

As discussed in the previous chapter, four women (Christine, Jean, Joan and Marcela) are currently affected by their female physiology insofar as menstruation and hormonal changes affect their emotional state, energy level and sense of well-being. However, these problems are not simply a matter of individual experience; social attitudes also affect the meaning attributed to them. Christine, Jean and Joan, since understanding that the difficulties they experience are cyclical and related to their menstrual or hormonal cycles, are less critical of themselves than they used to be. The knowledge that their emotional vulnerability is physiologically based and temporary has helped them adjust to the changes they experience in themselves and to accept themselves as emotionally fragile during these times. Marcela, on the other hand, perceives her health problems as a "weakness" on her part, referring to "horrible neurotic symptoms, like migraine headaches and irregular periods" as symptoms she has "suffered unnecessarily." She also dismisses this "weakness" as typically female, and dislikes herself because of it. Thus, knowledge about their hormonal functioning is an important factor in the attitudes these women have and the kinds of judgments they make about themselves. Attitudes of members of the medical profession toward women's health problems also affects women's experience of themselves. This, however, will be discussed later under the heading "Social Factors."

Temperament

Six of the participants experienced themselves as having been "born with" a particular temperament or personality which in part determined how they responded to their experiences. Mary says: "I was a very quiet, withdrawn child. All my life I've always been withdrawn ...." Being withdrawn contributed to her becoming self-conscious at puberty, she believes, to her lack of confidence in her intellect, and to her general tendency to behave passively. As Mary looks back over her life, it appears to her that her temperament has always been a problem. She states: "I've never had self-confidence. It's something I struggle with every day of my life." Similarily, Jean perceives herself as having always been shy, timid, fearful, withdrawn and solitary. This tendency affected her in school and university and in the jobs she has held. She explains: "I was so timid that I didn't learn very fast. When you're afraid, your mind kind of blocks learning anything, and that's always been true with me on any new job." Other factors worked to reinforce these tendencies - factors involving appearance, relationships within their families and their family status in the community - factors which will be discussed in the sections to follow.

Beret and Joan speak of themselves as having "always been" of a particular temperament. Beret tells how she has always had determination and drive (like her mother) and always been affectionate toward children (like her father was toward her). In addition she was always a tomboy - always independent, active and interested in work and play outdoors. Beret's mother taught her to be determined and independent, while her father modelled affectionate behavior and reinforced her tomboy interests and activities. Beret developed a close relationship with her brother, with whom she spent much time working and playing. However, Beret's preference for outdoor activities cost her the affection of her mother, who seemed to Beret to favor her more "feminine" sister. Thus, while Beret's tomboy activities were encouraged and supported in part, it seems unlikely that she engaged in these activities simply because she was reinforced for doing so. Individual temperament seems to have played a part. Like Beret, Joan also claims to have "always been a tomboy" - always active and interested in "male" activities. Whereas Beret spent much time with her brother, Joan was one of a gang of neighborhood boys. However, here the similarity ends. Joan received no support from

her parents for her tomboy behavior. Rather, her mother modelled inactivity and dependence on Joan's stepfather, and tried to discourage Joan's tomboy activities, pleading with her to be "ladylike." Further, she refused to buy her "boys' toys," instead buying her dolls, doll houses, baby carriages, doll cutouts, etc. In spite of these attempts to restrict her behavior, Joan's interest in being active, independent and involved in so-called male activities persisted. Joan theorizes about her belief that families have little effect on their children, that one's individual temperament will win out over environmental influences:

> Because I firmly believe that it doesn't matter what kind of environment you're from, you're going to be what you're going to be. I don't know whether that's believing in fate or what, but I came from a broken family, I didn't like my step-father, my mother was always screaming at me, and I feel that I've done alright. And I've known girls that come from a super close family that are hookers in Vancouver. So I think it's what's in you, rather than what people tell you and how you're brought up. I think it's really what's in you. I think that if you're really determined that you're going to do something, then you'll do it. Does that make any sense? It makes sense to me.

It is clear from Joan's account that her preference for an active and independent life has persisted from childhood to adulthood.

Theresa and Elizabeth talked about having possibly inherited genetic tendencies. For Theresa, this involves being rebellious and determined like her mother and great-grandmother. At the same time, she recognizes that learning from these women through their modelling and teaching that women did not have to put up with beatings and insults from men affected her a great deal. In the following passage she contemplates how she came to be as she is:

> ... and I guess maybe that (her mother's independence) was sort of instilled in my mind and I accepted it. And I guess I went along the same, or maybe we both have the same rebellious nature.

The issue for Elizabeth of a genetic predisposition in her personality involves a diagnosis by members of the medical profession that she is either schizophrenic or manic-depressive, and that she inherited these tendencies. Knowing that her youngest brother committed suicide and that several other brothers have emotional problems, Elizabeth acknowledges the possibility of an inherited factor. At the same time, she knows that having been abused and emotionally neglected as children has affected her brothers as it affected her. Further, she is certain that her nurse's training, nursing experience in Vietnam, marriage, hysterectomy and ultimate disillusionment with the

medical profession all contributed to the depression she originally developed after being a physically, psychologically and sexually abused child. Elizabeth deplores any simplistic theory which pinpoints only one cause of behavior, referring to the genetic/environmental debate as the "either/or error." About this she states:

> It's always all those things! It's just a matter of at one point in time, maybe it's just a little bit more of one than the other. Plus a lot of other things you're not aware of.

For Elizabeth, as for Mary, Jean, Beret, Joan and Theresa, it may be concluded that individual temperament was one of a number of factors which affected their experience as women and the meanings they gave it.

Physical Appearance

Body size and apearance has been a major factor affecting self acceptance for three of the 13 participants, and a minor factor for two women. For Beret, being big and tall (the opposite of what she perceived the ideal image of a woman to be) was a factor that affected her as a child and continues to affect her today. Being big and tall, in and of itself, was not the problem and was probably an asset to Beret in her work on the farm. The problem stemmed from Beret's experience of being judged by others (her neighbor and her mother) because she did not fit the ideal image of what a feminine woman *should* look like. Beret explains that she was deeply affected by a neighbour who consistently commented on her size, and by the fact that her mother favored her more "feminine" sister. Images of feminine women in the media (films, books, magazines, advertising, etc.) reinforced her perception that her size was not acceptable. As a result, Beret continues to be self conscious about her size, perceiving herself as "ungainly" and "conspicuous." She dislikes this aspect of herself and wishes she were "smaller and daintier" or "average" so that she would appear more "feminine."

For Jean, body size continues to be a factor affecting her acceptance of herself because she is overweight and does not fit the ideal image of femininity which dictates that women be small, dainty and thin. Jean believes that she is disadvantaged because she is fat — that others reject her for being fat and do not understand her as a person. She believes that weight is a greater problem for women than for men because men are judged first for their achievements and women are judged first for their appearance. In fact, as regards being successful in the working world, Jean believes that it is to

women's advantage to be as invisible or standard as possible – that they are less likely to be judged by their bodies if they are neither unattractive nor very attractive. Jean judges herself to be unattractive because she is fat and consequently dislikes herself. She states:

> I have never liked my body at all, and when I dream, I dream that I look different. I have never accepted the way I look.... It comes from being fat.

Jean describes her self-rejection as having a crippling effect on her life. The devastation she has experienced began at an early age, with her awareness that she was different from her peers. "It's come from a lifetime of feeling that I was inadequate because I didn't look like everybody else." In addition to being thin, looking like everyone else meant having the right (i.e., same) hairstyle and clothing – meeting the standard set by the peer group. Jean knew she didn't meet the standard when she was a child, and feels she never will. She states:

> I'm always going to be straight off the farm, age 12, the only kid in school who wears braided hair and doesn't have any clothes like anybody else.

Mary, while not affected negatively by her appearance today, experienced herself as different (and therefore unacceptable) during adolescence in much the same way as did Jean. She states:

> I was uncomfortable with my physical self. I was overweight in junior high school and I had long, long braids. I could sit on my hair, and that set me apart from all the kids and I just felt awful. A big fat toad! I made my mother cut my hair when I went into grade seven and I lost weight and looked like the rest of the kids. But I still didn't, I never felt physically great around anyone, especially in junior high school....They (other girls) were cool, but I was just a meatball in high school.

Thus for both Jean and Mary, physical appearance in and of itself did not represent a negative experience. Rather, the experience of being perceived as different from their peers, of being judged as not fitting an acceptable image, strongly influenced Jean's and Mary's experience and the meaning of their physical appearance to them.

Although not perceiving their appearance to be a major factor affecting their experience as women, Joan and Alice did discuss their appearance as one aspect of being a woman. As an adolescent Joan felt different from the majority of her classmates because she developed physically at an early age. She was teased and became self-conscious about her appearance. As an adult, she is conscious of being 20 pounds overweight and generally feels uncomfortable about her appearance (hair and

clothing), feeling she does not portray the "successful image" she *should*, according to the experts. She states: "I don't think my image is what it's supposed to be. Like it should be a different image." For Joan the issue is the same as for Beret, Jean and Mary – her appearance was (and is) problematic because she has been perceived by others or perceives herself to be unacceptable because she does not fit an acceptable image. As with Joan, Alice dislikes herself because she is "too fat." It means to her that she is unattractive and it takes up a lot of energy – "I fight it all the time." Alice also dislikes that she talks about her weight because this means to her she does not accept herself, and consequently she loses respect for herself.

If self–rejection results from judging one's physical appearance negatively, it follows that self–acceptance results from judging one's physical appearance positively. Marcela verifies this. She describes how she feels attractive and is comfortable with her female body. This means to her that she can easily communicate with people and establish trust in relationships. She explains:

> (I like) women and men who like the way they look and who are comfortable with their physical presence. And I like that about myself. I think I'm attractive and I like myself. Being comfortable with my physical presence – well, it means first of all that you have a new instrument with which you can communicate with other people .... I just mean your relationship to yourself is the first thing that people notice, and if it's favorable then you have an easy in on a person. You can establish trust right away.... I think I'm quite comforable with my womanhood.

C. Family Relationships and Meaning

All of the 13 participants discussed family members and family dynamics as having had a significant effect on them. Mothers and fathers, and sometimes grandparents, sisters, brothers, aunts and cousins were discussed as having had either positive or negative effects. Which family members or what particular family dynamic were most significant in having either a positive or negative effect varied from woman to woman. In what manner the woman was affected by family relationships, i.e., whether behavior was modelled, expected, reinforced, discouraged, punished, ignored, etc., or whether the woman felt loved, protected, appreciated, neglected, abused, rejected, etc., in her family, also varied from woman to woman. Relationships between family members (i.e., between mother and father, mother and sister, mother and brother, mother and grandmother, husband and daughter) were also discussed as having had a

significant effect. Further, other factors relating to family composition such as number and sex of children and birth order were considered relevant factors by some of the women. Relationships within the family which had a significant effect on the women's experience as women and the meaning they attributed to their experience will be discussed as follows:

1. Relationships to Mothers
2. Relationships to Fathers
3. Family Dynamics
4. Relationships to Other Relatives

Relationships to Mothers

Nine participants stated they experienced both positive and negative aspects in their relationships with their mothers, or received conflicting messages from them. Two women discussed their relationships with their mothers as having had only a positive effect and two only a negative effect. Theresa and Heidi spoke only of positive experiences in relation to their mothers. Theresa perceived her mother as a strong and independent woman who taught her to respect herself, to value herself as equal to men and to be morally responsible in her behavior. She saw her mother as an active leader in the family and as a woman who could stand up and fight against those men (including her husband) who thought women should know their *proper place*. Heidi, although actually speaking little of her childhood in the interview, referred to her mother as loving and hard-working, and spoke of happy times, working and having fun together. She values how her parents brought her up, explaining that she wouldn't have been strong enough to withstand the abuse she suffered in her marriage if she hadn't had a good childhood.

Of those who had a conflicting relationship with their mothers, Beret, Denise and Alice experienced the relationships as primarily positive with a lesser negative effect. Beret credits her mother with having taught her to be resourceful, generous, practical, thrifty, determined, competent, strong, and independent by modelling these behaviors and by expecting them of Beret. She also believes that her mother taught her to think, and influenced her to get an education and "be something." However, Beret felt rejected by her mother because she was not feminine like her sister, and preferred working outside with her father and brother rather than sitting in the house and quietly

crocheting. Beret thought that to her mother she was a "black sheep." Denise's relationship with her mother parallels Beret's. Denise had a strong, self-educated mother who taught her to think, be broad-minded, and respect her body, who encouraged her to develop her intelligence and abilities and told her to "go out and do better" for herself. The negative aspect of Denise's relationship to her mother was that Denise perceived her mother to be closer to her sons - to be more understanding and accepting of Denise's brothers. Consequently, Denise was hurt and resentful when she felt herself being unfairly disciplined or misunderstood by her mother. The conflicting messages that Alice received from her mother differed from those received by Denise and Beret. Whereas Denise and Beret perceived their mothers valuing them less because they were either female or not the right kind of female, the conflicting messages Alice perceived involved what she should or shouldn't do as a woman. Alice saw as positive the direct message her mother gave her to go out into the world and do things for herself, and to avoid being trapped the way her mother had been. From this advice Alice learned to strive for independence and eventually become "her own person." However, Alice also learned to do what her mother actually did, which was to hide her strength, be dependent and subservient, and to avoid conflict and manipulate situations so that men think they are making the decisions. In other words, Alice learned from her mother to be passively persuasive and charming as a means to exert influence or control.

Six of the women interviewed (Sally, Jean, Madelaine, Elizabeth, Mary and Marcela) experienced their relationships to their mothers as conflicting and as largely negative. Sally's mother was physically absent when Sally was small, having left her with her grandmother for some time. Sally resented being left and felt rejected by her mother. When she later rejoined her mother, Sally experienced the relationship as lacking in communication and her mother as critical and punitive. As an adult, Sally continues to feel resentment towards her mother's interference and criticism of her life style. In spite of this, however, Sally values that her mother lives nearby and that she could go to her for help if necessary. She also feels a responsibility to live nearby her mother so that she can "be there" when her father is out on his trapline.

For Jean, Madelaine and Elizabeth, their relationships to their mothers were significantly affected by the fact that their mothers had many children (and in Jean's case

several miscarriages), were physically and emotionally exhausted from the amount of work required to take care of a large family, and had additional worries. These mothers were experienced as being unaffectionate, undemonstrative, uncommunicative or as being absent in spirit. Elizabeth feels, in addition, an anger toward her mother for not standing up to her alcoholic father and for not protecting her from being sexually abused. In spite of these negative experiences, the mothers are today valued in some way. Elizabeth values that her mother encouraged her to achieve at school, believing that her mother vicariously experienced her successes. Jean values her mother because she was strong, capable and intelligent and is a connection to her own history. Madelaine values that her mother survived a hard life and perceives her as her first connection to life itself.

Mary's conflicting feelings about her mother stem from a lack of communication and understanding between them which caused problems for Mary. For example, Mary's being unprepared for menstruation and being afraid to tell her mother she was bleeding was a traumatic event for her, one which she handled without her mother's support and understanding. Similarly, Mary's mother failed to understand and support her feelings of ethnic inferiority, inadvertently reinforcing Mary's insecurity by her own desires to negate her ethnic community and gain social status. Mary states that her memories of her mother are vague, but understands that her mother's life must have been difficult. She describes her mother as an orphaned daughter and an oppressed wife who gave up her university education to marry and was forced to conform to her husband's expectations. Mary appreciates that her mother supported her against her father somewhat during adolescence, and encouraged her to be educated to "do better" for herself. In fact, Mary studied to become a teacher because her mother desired this, even though she herself did not like or do well in her education courses.

Whereas the conflict Mary experienced with her mother seemed to be manifest in an undercurrent of misunderstanding and lack of communication, Marcela's conflict with her mother was direct and overt. Although she recalls little of her adolescence (believing it to be too painful to be remembered), Marcela experienced her mother as hostile, controlling and punitive. Having some distance from the relationship she now understands that her mother had a difficult life. She had to compromise her career

ambitions to satisfy first her father and then her husband. Eventually she built a successful career in the business world without the support of her husband and in spite of 1950s attitudes which idealized women who stayed at home. That her husband was an alcoholic created additional stress. Marcela believes that her mother felt jealous of Marcela's freedom and of the affection she received from her father when he had been drinking, and that this was one aspect of her anger toward Marcela. On the positive side, however, Marcela feels that her mother has always been supportive of her pursuing an academic career and today is proud of her achievements. She has come to respect her mother for her own accomplishments too, and for the fact of her valuing her ethnic heritage. Understanding the difficulties her mother had and appreciating her strengths now, Marcela feels less hurt by the relationship than she once did. She maintains, however, that for the present she likes the *idea* of family more than the reality.

Joan and Christine experienced their relationships with their mothers as largely negative. Joan lived with her grandmother until age eight when her mother married her stepfather. Living with her mother and stepfather, she saw herself as very different from her mother, who was emotionally and financially dependent, who didn't want to work outside the home and who passively watched TV. Unlike her mother, Joan wanted to "be something." Her mother seemed not to accept that Joan was different from her and tried to insist she be "ladylike" and play with dolls. Conversations about menstruation and sexuality were non-existent; sex was a "dirty word." Joan quit school in grade 10, moved away from home, and enrolled in business college. She and her mother never did learn to communicate.

Christine's relationship to her mother centered around the large amount of work expected of Christine (and not of her brothers) to help her mother care for a family of seven brothers and an abusive, alcoholic father. She recalls that if she ever wanted to sit around and do nothing like her brothers, her mother told her she was lazy. She resents not only that she was expected to be always responsible at home and to work at part-time jobs to earn money, but that she was not encouraged to achieve anything more for herself – that she was "just prepared to grow up and be somebody's wife." Christine's relationship with her mother was also negative in that her mother failed to

protect her from a sexually abusive father. Rather, Christine became her mother's protector from her violent husband, a role she continued to play to her own detriment until adulthood, when as a mother of two children of her own, she could no longer bear the burden of responsibility for her mother.

Relationships to Fathers

Relationships to their fathers formed a different pattern for the women than did their relationships to their mothers. Four of the 13 participants perceived them to have been strongly positive, two perceived them to have been intensely conflicted, and three perceived them to have been strongly negative. Of the remaining four participants, two perceived their fathers as having had much less effect on them than did their mothers and two perceived their relationships to their fathers as having been of little or no importance.

The four women who experienced their relationships with their fathers as overwhelmingly positive were Denise, Beret, Heidi and Sally. Denise perceived her father to be a wise man who prepared his daughters to take their rightful places in the world along with their brothers. He encouraged his children to read, think, question and discuss ideas, to get as much education as possible, to develop their capabilities and to work honestly. Most important to Denise, especially because her mother favored her brothers, was that her father believed and taught his children that women were as valuable and as worthy of respect as were men. She has, as a result of her father's attitudes, carried a feeling of self-respect and self-confidence with her throughout her lifetime.

Beret describes her father as a kind, affectionate man who was always willing to help his neighbours or lend money to people in need. Being a tomboy she spent much time working with him outside on the farm and she felt very close to him. She also learned from him an affection toward children, which led to her decision to become a teacher. Especially important to Beret was that, unlike her mother, her father did not require her to fit a particular image or role; he accepted her for what she was – big and tall, active and interested in being outside with the men. In her words, ."...to him I was just all right the way I was." Unfortunately for Beret, her father was not a strong man, and he died when she was a child. Thus she lost the person upon whom she depended

the most. She thinks that as a result she became strong and independent at an early age, which made leaving home to attend high school an easy adjustment.

As stated above, Heidi didn't speak much about her childhood in the interview. What she did say about her father was entirely positive, however. She speaks about working in the fields with him and him telling stories while they worked. She was especially close to her father it seems, since her mother was often sick and in the hospital. Heidi credits her good upbringing and the loving care she experienced as a child from both of her parents with having made her a person strong enough to survive her husband's abuse.

Sally perceives her father as a loving person to whom she has always felt close. She tells how when she was a young teenage mother, she assisted her father in his commercial fishing work, even taking her baby with them in the boat, because she wanted to help him make a living. Part of Sally's love for her father seems to be that she feels sorry for him, perceiving that her mother betrayed him as she did Sally. She seems to want to protect her father, both from the knowledge she has about her mother's past behavior and from her own present behavior and problems – information she does not keep from her mother. She explains that she has already hurt her father enough by becoming pregnant at 15. Thus it appears that Sally's idealization of her relationship with her father involves a certain amount of deception.

Marcela and Jean had relationships with their fathers that were intense with both positive and negative feelings. Marcela experienced an intense relationship with her father that was filled with conflict. As a young child, she described herself as her "father's daughter": as wanting to please him by being both feminine and competent and as wanting to be like him – creative, intelligent, sensitive and nurturing. During adolescence, the relationship became more complex and negative aspects developed. Marcela learned that her father was weak and incapable of being responsible or practical, and that his alchoholism was a symptom of this. She began to lose respect for him. Marcela felt conflicted, however, because it was when her father was drinking that he gave of himself, intellectually and emotionally, to her. She also felt conflicted about her father because even though he represented to her what she might achieve in terms of being intelligent and creative, and was the only parent to offer nurturance, he judged

her decision to leave the Fashion and Modelling School as weak – as the decision of a gypsy. She sensed that he did not really want her to achieve success at university and surpass his own accomplishments. Further, it disappoints her that he does not value his ethnic heritage, an aspect of her own life which has become central to her studies and work.

Jean, too, had conflicting feelings about her father, although the nature of the conflict was very different from what Marcela experienced. She perceived her father to be a shy and gentle man who had a "special touch with babies" and who not only liked women but preferred the company of women to that of men. Jean admired her father and felt lucky to have grown up in a non-sexist household. Her father wanted her to be married so that she would have someone to care for her, she recalls. The conflict for Jean arises insofar as her father was not a stong man, eventually became very ill and unable to work, and almost died. She experienced his possible death as frightening, and recognized his inability to work as a threat to their already vulnerable financial situation. Thus, while her father's gentleness was something she admired, his illness reinforced her fearful and timid outlook and compounded her emotional insecurity.

The relationships to their fathers experienced by Theresa and Alice seem to have had less impact on them than those discussed thus far. Theresa appreciated that as one of the girls on a farm, she was not restricted in her behavior or in the kind of work she did, explaining that she often helped her father by driving the tractor when she was only 11 years old. At the same time, she recognizes that her father has a chauvinistic attitude toward women – women should know their *proper place* and be subservient to men. This attitude did not affect Theresa, however, because she saw her mother fight her father's attitude directly and actively. In fact, Theresa sees her father as having had little influence on his children – he mostly stayed in the background while her mother took the responsibility for bringing up and disciplining the children.

Alice speaks of her father, too, as having had traditional expectations of her – that she would get married and settle down and that some other man would one day take care of "his little girl." In later years, he supported her endeavors to live an independent life and set up her own business. However, he seems to have had less impact on her than did her mother, being largely in the background.

Christine, Elizabeth and Mary perceived their relationships with their fathers as having had a strongly negative effect on them. Christine's father abused her sexually and she disliked and mistrusted him. She confronted him with his incestuous behavior when she noticed him beginning to abuse her younger sister. However, she recalls that even after the incest stopped, he continued to treat her as a sexual object, commenting on her body and wanting her to sit on his lap. The effect on Christine was that she did not feel respected by her father and felt ashamed of her father and of herself. Christine was also afraid of her father's violence and was aware of her mother's need to be protected from him – a need she attempted to meet for many years. She generally felt helpless in the face of her father's violence and powerless to change the situation.

Elizabeth' was also sexually abused by her alcoholic father. This experience had different levels of meaning for her. On one level she simply categorized the sexual abuse as part of the general abuse and neglect she experienced throughout childhood from both parents. She rationalized that her sacrifice would bring its own reward in heaven, a lesson she learned in church and from the nuns at school. On another level she was aware that other little girls were loved and protected in a way that she was not, concluded that she was unequal to them – a "ruined" person, and felt socially alienated. Elizabeth developed a belief that men were incapable of being responsible for themselves or for others, and that she should not expect much from them. It came as no surprise to her that professional men with whom she later worked or to whom she went for help, would exploit and sexually abuse her.

Mary experienced her father as a man with traditional Hispanic values – a man who loves God, his family and his wife. However, he was rigid and oppressive in his behavior, was critical and possessive of Mary's mother and frequently lost his temper with the children. Mary describes how she "clashed horribly" with her father during adolescence. She felt guilty about enjoying rock and roll music and wanting to go out to dances with boys, because her father saw this as sinful. His attitudes toward sex (women should not be overtly sexual but men could be) made Mary feel ashamed of her developing sexuality. Consequently, she repressed her sexual feelings until she left home and to this day she remains self-conscious about her body.

Joan and Madelaine did not speak of their fathers as having had any particular effect on them. Joan apparently did not know her biological father because she did not mention him. She lived initially with her grandmother and at age eight moved in with her newly-married mother and stepfather. She didn't like her stepfather at first, perceiving him as someone who was strict and authoritarian, who never showed emotion and who was not supportive. Today she sees him as a "good guy now" who "put up with a fair amount with me." Like Joan, Madelaine said little about her father, except that she recalls him "being friendly" with her mother (patting or caressing her) and her mother not liking it. Other than that, she has the impression of an extreme lack of communication and lack of warmth and in its place "so much negative." The result for Madelaine was that she thought she was "a terrible person." About men and women generally, she assumed they led separate lives and related only around sex, which had to be hidden.

Family Dynamics, Birth Order, Size and Composition

While relationships to individual parents had an effect on the women interviewed, the dynamics between parents also had an effect. The fact of having parents who were close and mutually respectful was seen by Beret, Heidi and Denise as having had a positive effect on their lives. They all see themselves as loving and capable of giving to others. Jean also saw her parents as close and mutually respectful. Other factors however (her mother's exhaustion and emotional distance, her father's illness and the family's poverty and social isolation) seem to have countered any positive effects that might have come from the positive parent dynamic.

Alice and Mary were affected by having grown up in families where their fathers were dominant and their mothers subservient and constantly trying to appease their husbands. Both women today have trouble asserting themselves or directly taking power in relationships. Theresa, on the other hand, witnessed a dynamic whereby her mother refused to be subservient and actively fought Theresa's father's chauvinistic attitudes. Theresa today has no trouble asserting herself directly and actually enjoys the challenge of being a woman in this sense. She feels herself to be an equal partner in her marriage. Joan's mother was dependent on Joan's authoritarian stepfather. However, Joan felt distanced from her parents, feeling herself to be different from her mother and disliking her stepfather. She consciously desires a marriage in which there is no

power struggle and in which she feels equal and respected. However, she has difficulty assuming an equal status and acting on it, having had a mother who modelled passive, dependent behavior.

Tension and/or emotional distance between their parents likely contributed to problems of emotional insecurity and personal instability experienced by Elizabeth, Christine, Marcela and Madelaine when they were adolescents and young adults. Elizabeth and Christine eventually worked out their emotional problems with the help of therapists. Marcela and Madelaine appear to have unresolved emotional conflicts which seem to reduce their self-confidence and magnify their fears. Marcela copes by dismissing her fears and emotions as weak and indicative of her "female irrationality." Madelaine copes by largely refraining from taking risks in her marriage and by confining her activities to those which do not threaten her husband. For Sally, the trauma of the separation of her parents and her consequent separation from both of them when she was a young child has certainly affected her life. Later, when she and they were reunited, she feared that any confrontation of her mother by herself would result in another separation, so she withdrew. To this day, she blames her mother for the separation and feels a need to protect her father. In addition, her fear of confrontation persists - she has dificulty confronting her mother and other people as well.

Family dynamics in terms of family size, birth order, sex of siblings and interactions between parents and siblings also were important factors for some of the women interviewed. Being the eldest daughter in a large family had a very significant effect on Christine and Elizabeth. (Elizabeth was also the only daughter.) Both women were expected to take care of household duties and their younger siblings, sharing or even assuming the responsibilities of their mothers at an early age. Both women suffered depression and emotional exhaustion as young women. Elizabeth made a conscious decision to never have children of her own, because she felt she had dispensed with all of her "mothering energy" by the time she reached age 18. Christine had two children of her own, found the work of maintaining a household, a husband, two children and her mother exhausting, became ill and depressed and eventually left her marriage to find a more satisfying life for herself.

Being a child from a large family seems to have meant going without emotional nurturance for middle children as well as for older children. Madelaine, a middle child in a family of 13, felt that she was given no affection or encouragement and that she missed out on something. As a result, she spent years searching for a sense of herself after she left home. She also found herself having difficulty in her marriage and lacking a feeling of love for her own children. Jean, too, felt there was never enough love to go around in her family of five children. The additional worries her parents had about poverty and illness and her mother's emotional distance compounded this experience. The effect on Jean was to make her extremely insecure and fearful, feelings that remain with her and continue to inhibit her today. Denise was also a middle child in a large family. She saw this as having been a positive aspect of her life for she is now very close to her brothers and sisters. However, she was aware of her mother not having enough time for her because of the amount of work needing to be done to maintain such a large household.

Sex of siblings seems to have been an important factor for two of the women interviewed. Being the eldest of three daughters living on a farm, Theresa assumed the responsibilities typically given to a boy – she became a farm-hand and drove a tractor at age 11. This experience gave her the skills and confidence to again take on jobs defined as male when she was an adult. Jean, an only sister with four brothers, had the opposite experience to Theresa. She wasn't needed to do farm work so didn't learn the skills and gain confidence to attempt "men's jobs." Further, she felt of little value because she perceived her lunch-making and house-cleaning jobs to be less important than the outside jobs done by her brothers.

Relationships to Relatives Other Than Mother or Father

Relationships to other family members were mentioned by all of the women interviewed. However, these relationships appeared to be significant for only six of the 13 women. Grandmothers and aunts seem generally to have had the greatest impact. Theresa and Marcela were strongly influenced by their grandmothers in a positive way. Theresa admires her great-grandmother's strength and ability to manage a farm and raise five children on her own. She also admires that her great-grandmother stood up to her husband, refused to take his beatings, went to jail for him when he was caught making

moonshine because he was too afraid to go himself, and finally decided to tolerate him no longer – "gave him the boot and told him to get." Theresa thinks her great-grandmother was "a liberated lady" in her time and wonders how she managed to survive without any emotional or financial support from society. Further, she believes her great-grandmother has something to teach women today about being "strong enough to holler and fight for what they want" in order to make changes. Marcela was positively influenced by both grandmothers. She thought of her Hungarian grandmother as the ideal woman – someone who was artistic, creative and intelligent and yet could be nurturing, strong and practical, too. The latter qualities appeared to be in sharp contrast with the men in Marcela's family who, although they were very loving and supportive of her endeavors, seemed weak and incompetent. Unfortunately this grandmother died and Marcela was left without an important source of affection and support at a time when she especially needed it. Marcela's Slovak grandmother was also supportive. She sent Marcela to an expensive fashion school, and Marcela believes that this grandmother would have supported her in any endeavor.

Mary speaks of her grandparents as exerting a big influence on her life, although she did not see the effect as entirely positive. Her grandparents were upwardly mobile people, she explains, who valued "the buck" and put a monetary value on love. It embarrassed Mary to be the favorite grandchild who received the most expensive gifts. Mary's grandparents did have high expectations for her to go to college and be educated. However, they also tried to influence Mary to enter a career of their choosing (preferably secretarial work or teaching) so that she would make good money and be financially secure. Even more preferable would be for Mary to go to college and find a rich husband. Thus the influence from Mary's grandparents to go to college was strong, but in a sense undermined her sense of self-confidence and worth – she should not go to college to develop herself but to find someone to look after her.

Joan and Sally both lived with their grandmothers when they were young children but they said little or nothing about the effect their grandmothers had on them. When questioned about this, Sally replied that she didn't like staying with her grandmother because there were too many other people living there, the uncles and male cousins teased her and she missed her mother. Elizabeth referred to her grandmother also in a

negative sense. She perceived her to be like her mother, locked into a narrow-minded view of the word which results in her being a closed and critical person. Elizabeth hopes never to be like her grandmother.

As was stated earlier, aunts also had a strong impact on some of the women interviewed. Theresa talked about one aunt in particular, a widow, whom she admired for raising four daughters and running a farm on her own. She used to be able to talk to this aunt when she felt troubled about things in her own family, and she felt understood and supported by her. Speaking with this aunt gave her another perspective, she thinks, which enabled her to happily return to her own family, feeling better. Sally similarly experienced support and understanding in relation to a particular aunt and uncle. They talked to her about her choices when at 15 she became pregnant, and offered to help her with whatever decision she made. They have remained a close and understanding source of support to Sally. Sally also has a close relationship to an older female cousin with whom she once lived, who actually looked after her more than did her mother. Sally still feels especially close to this cousin, perceiving her as someone she can talk to when she's having trouble with her mother.

Aunts were perceived by Jean and Alice to have a negative effect on their experience of themselves as women. Both women are single, and continually experience at family gatherings a judgment on the part of their aunts that they have somehow failed as women because they are single. The career accomplishments of both women tend not to be valued. Alice experiences this judgement as uncomfortable but feels no need to apologize for her single status because she enjoys it. Jean, however, is deeply hurt by her aunts' judgment, aware that it touches her own feelings of failure and inadequacy and her perception of herself as unlovable.

Apart from Sally and Mary, only one other woman mentioned uncles and grandfathers as having had an impact on their lives. Marcela talks about her extended family of uncles and grandfathers for whom she performed at family gatherings. Being the only granddaughter she also assumed other responsibilities in the family for which she received much reinforcement. She perceives this early training and encouragement as having given her confidence to go out and achieve in the world outside of her home and community. On a practical level, however, she perceived the men in her family as

less capable than the women.

Relationships with siblings were discussed to only a small extent by the women interviewed. Beret discussed being jealous of her feminine sister and close to her brother. Denise mentioned being supported more by her brothers than her sisters when she was a widow, but generally feels close to both sisters and brothers now. Marcela spoke of having to take care of her brother who was handicapped with arthritis. Elizabeth felt fond of the brothers she once cared for, seeing them as her only source of love, but has little contact with them now. Christine, who once resented the brothers and sisters she cared for, also feels fond of them now. Theresa and Mary feel fond of their siblings but have largely replaced family with friends. Heidi writes to her sister and brother in Germany but has seen them only twice since she came to Canada. Madelaine feels especially close to some of her siblings and wishes she could see them more often than she does. Joan and Sally have siblings much younger than themselves of whom they feel fond, but there is too much of an age gap for them to feel close.

D. Social Factors and Meaning

Numerous social forces were considered to have a significant effect on the lives of the women interviewed because of their impact on the individual woman or her family, thereby influencing the meaning women gave to their experiences. They will be discussed in the following order:

1. Family's Status in the Community
2. Friends
3. Social Norms and Generational Cohort
4. Professionals and Institutional Policies

Family's Status in the Community

The status (social and/or financial) of the family of origin in the community was discussed as having had an important effect on their lives by eight of the 13 participants. Two women felt they benefited and two felt disadvantaged as a result of their family's social status. A fifth woman both benefited and suffered in relation to her family's social status. Beret and Denise both felt their family's social status in their communities to be a positive factor. Beret describes how her parents took responsibility for

community needs by assuming executive positions in organizations, holding school board meetings in their home, boarding the country school teacher, keeping the assessment role and collecting taxes. In addition they generously shared their possessions with people in need. Thus, Beret's parents were respected in the community and Beret was proud of them. Denise also respected her parents and their status in their community. She describes with pride how they shared food and possessions with others during the Depression. That her parents were self-educated and valued reading, thinking, discussing and developing the mind through education seemed to her prestigious. She was also impressed that her mother spoke three languages: German, French and Cree.

In contrast to the experience of Beret and Denise, Jean and Elizabeth felt their family's social status had a negative effect on their lives. Jean describes how a number of factors contributed to her family's alienation from their community: they moved twice and were considered outsiders, her parents were shy people who preferred an isolated life on the farm, and her parents assumed nontraditional gender-roles (father was often ill at home and mother worked in the community) which made them different from other families. Elizabeth felt disadvantaged in her community because her father was a known alcoholic. Further, she secretly felt unequal to others because of her father's incestuous behavior toward her.

Heidi both benefited and suffered at different times in relation to her family's social status. Living in German occupied Czecholslovakia during World War II, her father (one of only two young men left in their community) was made officially responsible for the needs of all the families in the surrounding farming community. It was a position of honor and Heidi was proud, even though it meant that she and her sister had to take over the farm work at home. After the war ended and the communist Czechoslovakian government took over, Heidi's family (along with other German families) lost their farm and their freedoms, experienced discrimination, were put into concentration camps and were eventually shipped in cattle cars as refugees to Germany. (Heidi was 16 at the time.)

Two women seem to have benefited from, and five women were hindered by their family's financial status. The relative financial security of Beret's family added to their social status in the community. Her father had enough money to be able to lend

some to others and the family was the only one in the community to keep their phone during the Depression. Beret claims to have never felt the effects of the Depression the way others did. She also benefited from her family's financial status in that they could afford to send her away to high school and to normal school for teacher training. Alice benefited from her family's financial security in the same way – she was given the opportunity to go to university without worrying about how to pay for it. After university, she never worried about having to work – her family could afford to support her.

Their families financially insecurity affected the lives of five of the 13 participants in various ways. In Mary's and Jean's families, tensions and insecurity resulted from financial insecurity and seems to have affected their own emotional security during childhood. Mary's family was upwardly mobile, however, and could afford to send her away to college after high school. Jean's family could not afford to educate her after high school, however, so she went out to work for two years. Then, determined to become independent and to gain a sense of security in herself, she worked to put herself through university. Christine and Joan also experienced tension and insecurity in their families as a result of poverty. Christine was required to work at various jobs throughout her childhood to help maintain her large family. Unlike Mary and Jean, however, she did not perceive the possibility of having a different life. Christine was not encouraged to get an education or achieve success or independence – she would simply be a wife and mother like her own mother. Joan, too, was never encouraged to achieve at school or in a career. However, she felt she was different from her mother and vowed to "be something." There was no money for her to go to university so she attended business college on a government grant and became a secretary.

No mention was made of Sally's family being poor when she was a child. However, that being poor did affect her life significantly can be assumed from her stories of fishing with her father to help him make a living and being beaten by her husband for feeding her family a meal. Sally never spoke of currently being poor until after the interview. While answering the questionnaire, she revealed that she was living on a total of $485 per month, including a Widow's Allowance and Family Allowance.

Friends

Having childhood friends who could give support, share knowledge or otherwise satisfy a need that could not be met in the family was a matter of importance to five of the 13 women interviewed. Elizabeth speaks of a man she worked for when a child, who became like a father substitute to her, offering her the encouragement and support she did not get at home. Theresa describes a relationship she developed as a teenager, with a newly-married young woman, who provided her with information about her developing sexuality, a topic her mother found awkward. Alice and Beret talked about belonging to a group of friends. Interestingly, for Alice the focus in her group was often playing at being homemakers (when they were younger) or speculating about future husbands and weddings (when they were older). The groups assumed marriage to be the only goal for women. In Alice's words:

> We really didn't consider any other alternatives. Careers and doing that kind of thing was something that people did who didn't have the feminine qualities to get married and settle down and fall in love and all that kind of stuff.

Beret's group was quite different. They were actively involved in sports and games and going to dances in groups. Further, she was part of a small gang of three girls who delighted in their "escapades." (This might mean inviting two young men for a drive in their car and pushing out the one judged to be undesirable.) Belonging also meant to Beret belonging to her friends' families, and belonging to the families she boarded with as a student in high school and normal school and as a young teacher. These experiences and connections were considered valuable by Beret, and they are now a part of the memories she cherishes. Joan's significant experience of belonging involved her active participation in the gang of neighborhood boys, who treated her as their little sister. She has always been more interested in men's activities than in women's she explains, and always found men a lot more interesting to talk to because "they were always *doing* things, whereas women were just sort of *waiting*."

Feeling they did not belong to their peer group led to feelings of inferiority for four of the women. Jean and Mary attributed their rejection on the part of their peers to their weight and appearance. Their feelings of inferiority were probably compounded by other insecurities as well. That Jean's insecurity developed in relation to poverty, her parents' ill health and their social isolation has already been discussed. Mary's being

caught in her parents' struggle for upward mobility, out of the minority status which was her Hispanic heritage, will be discussed under the major heading, "Cultural/Political Factors and Meaning," which will follow. Not belonging was a status Elizabeth imposed on herself in reaction to her feeling of being "ruined" due to her experience as an incest victim. Marcela felt a conflict about belonging: as a teenager she wanted to be liked and be part of her peer group, but she rejected the attitudes and values of the group which put men first and assumed female friendships to be less important.

Current friendships and their meaning to 12 of the 13 women interviewed were discussed in the previous chapter under the heading "Finding Satisfaction in Achieving Relationships." Suffice it to say here that friends are perceived as very important by the 12 women because they are people with whom they can enjoy and share themselves, they are understanding, accepting and reinforcing (especially when they are in similar situations to the woman), and they participate together in an experience of mutual concern and support. Friendships with women were emphasized more than friendships with men.

Professionals and Institutional Policies

Various professional people who held positions of authority by virtue of their knowledge or their being representatives of social institutions seemed to have had a significant impact on the lives of the women interviewed. Also seen as having an effect were certain policies and practices of social institutions and government. These social factors will be discussed in the following order:

1. Teachers and Educational Policy
2. Doctors and Medical Practices
3. Therapists: Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Social Workers
4. The Catholic Church: Nuns, Priests, and Doctrine
5. Other Professionals and Policies

1. Teachers and Educational Policy:

Six women perceived certain teachers as having had a memorable effect on them. Elizabeth, Madelaine and Christine saw particular teachers as having had a positive effect on their lives because they were understanding and supportive, and encouraged them at school. This was important to Madelaine because she felt

neglected and unappreciated at home. Elizabeth, who was abused and given too much responsibility at home, experienced her teachers' approval and support as such a powerful force that she dared not risk annoying them for fear of losing their approval. Even after moving from one city to another, she kept up a correspondence with teachers to whom she felt particularly close. Elizabeth also recalls specific teachers who encouraged her to read, think, study languages and science, write plays and compete in public speaking. Successful academic achievement became for Elizabeth a means of personal validation and of redeeming her family in the eyes of the community, as well a means for her to escape the exploitation she suffered in her family. It is important to note that for the first eight years of her schooling, Elizabeth was taught by nuns who reinforced her religious beliefs, supported her emotionally and encouraged her academically. A nun who was the dean of her faculty at university was also very supportive to Elizabeth. When Elizabeth's mother pleaded with her to return home to take care of the family, the dean instructed Elizabeth to remain at the college, telling her it was her parents' responsibility, not hers, to care for their family. Thus, throughout her school and university years Elizabeth experienced her teachers as an extremely positive and supportive influence. Christine, who as a child had never been encouraged to achieve at school, once attended an English course at the university as a mature student where she encountered, as her teacher, a bright young woman. Meeting a woman who had a career that she enjoyed made a big impression on Christine and she decided that it was time that she, too, tried to achieve something for herself. The teacher became a positive role model.

Theresa, Sally and Marcela recall particular teachers, all male, as having had a negative impact. Theresa still remembers with anger an experience with a particular male teacher whom she perceives to have discriminated against the girls in his class. Specifically, he criticized the girls severely for their active play and admonished them for "spoiling" their bodies for their future husbands. Theresa was furious at the injustice of the differential treatment she experienced and at the implication that her body needed to be protected for a man's sake. Sally was also upset by the differential treatment she was forced by a male teacher to

experience. In her case the teacher sexually harassed her. When she complained to the school principal (also male) about her teacher's behavior, she was told to ignore it. Unable to cope and angry at having to put up with the teacher's harrassment, she left school and was eventually expelled for refusing to return. Marcela, too, has been negatively affected by male teachers, in her case, male professors. The problem for her was not that she was treated unjustly by her professors, but that because they were exclusively male and she never experienced a female role model, she came to believe that she could never succeed like these men, simply because she was a woman. Thus, even when she was obviously succeeding, the absence of female professors in her department reinforced Marcela's belief, adopted earlier in her life, that females were not as intelligent as males.

2. Doctors and Medical Practices:

Medical doctors had a significant effect on six of the 13 women interviewed. Joan and Heidi were very appreciative of the understanding and support they received from their family doctors (both male) when they were depressed. Both women were given tranquilizers as a temporary solution to their depression, and the advice to change their lifestyle in order to help themselves. Thus, with their doctors' support, Joan found a babysitter for her children and went out to work and Heidi eventually left her husband. Christine found her doctor to be supportive and respectful when he indicated to her that in order to save her health, she must not have more children and should probably have a hysterectomy. Important to Christine was that her doctor discussed with her the pros and cons of various solutions, made his recommendation and left the decision to her. Also important to her was the quality of care she received while recuperating from surgery. However, prior to this incident she had also been afraid to approach her doctor to ask for an abortion. She feared he would judge her and that her inability to cope with another child would not be understood.

Theresa, too, has had both good and bad experiences with doctors and medical practices. She spoke in detail about her experiences. At times when she was suffering from serious ovarian and uterine problems she encountered various

male doctors who without an examination of any kind told her she should have a hysterectomy because she "probably had cancer," who took no time to discuss her problem or alternative solutions, who seemed to see her concerns as an inconvenience to themselves, who told her that her uterus was no good to her because it was "just a baby carriage," and who she feels dismissed her as a neurotic – "a nutso woman" – when she questioned their treatment plans. After much searching Theresa eventually found a male doctor who treated her with respect, listened to her concerns and sensitively planned with her the surgery she required. While in the hospital prior to surgery Theresa had a very disappointing encounter with a female intern whom she had hoped would have empathy for her concerns. The young intern seemed quite unwilling and unable to listen to Theresa's concerns and appeared very tense and mechanical. Theresa wondered if perhaps she had been "molded" into perceiving patients in a particular way and was afraid to react on a human level. Theresa has become mistrustful of most doctors because, in addition to her own negative experiences, she is aware through her work of doctors' mistreatment of women in her own community. She is especially aware of certain doctors' inclination to perform hysterectomies on women who complain of backache and to give women tranquilizers for many complaints.

Like Theresa, Elizabeth has had both positive and negative experiences with doctors, and has found that the sex of the doctor does not determine the doctor's ability to understand. A female doctor failed to take seriously Elizabeth's complaints that the birth control pill she was using was making her depressed. She dismissed Elizabeth's depression, calling it a "neurotic complaint" related to her Catholic background. Elizabeth appreciated a male doctor offering her the solution of a hysterectomy to correct her heavy blood and iron loss during menstruation. However, she was aware that the surgery might not have been warranted and that a less drastic treatment such as a D & C was not first tried or even suggested. This indicates to her that unnecessary surgery is being performed. Another male doctor, who in his partner's absence checked Elizabeth after the surgery, treated her in a patronizing and punitive manner, telling her the surgery was a mistake and she would regret it. Elizabeth, being a member of the medical profession herself,

was disturbed not only by the effect of the doctor's criticism of herself but also by his criticism of his partner. Neither doctor was concerned with the emotional repercussions she suffered as a direct result of the surgery. Elizabeth's growing realization that doctors typically do not understand women's problems and do not seriously attend to women's complaints was reinforced when she encountered a fourth doctor who explained to her that the depression she experienced after surgery resulted from the symbolic meaning of the loss of menstruation. Elizabeth's professional relationship to the doctors she has worked with has also been both positive and negative. As a young nurse, she was shocked to discover that she was expected by doctors not to think and not to question, but only to carry out their orders. Forms of extreme nursing (emergency and operating room) provided some relief from these patronizing relationships because nurses' behavior was crucial and there was no time for playing power games. Her experience of sexual harrassment by doctors in Vietnam, however, combined with their neglect of their patients in favor of playing golf, contributed to her eventual decision to leave nursing.

Sally does not refer to a particular experience with a doctor, but rather to her impression that the medical profession generally does not understand or respect women. She recalls the experience of a friend, who went to her doctor with a specific complaint and was given "tranquilizers or Valium." Sally believes that whereas doctors treat women as if they're "crazy" when they have certain complaints, they treat men differently. She perceives doctors' practice of not taking women seriously as analagous to the general lack of respect men have for women in marriages and in society at large.

3. Therapists: Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Social Workers

Four of the 13 women interviewed had both positive and negative experiences with various types of therapists. Christine tells how she was in therapy at one time or another for nine and a half years, from the time she met her husband until she left him. She was constantly depressed, which she now understands to have been related to the responsibilities she assumed and abuse she suffered as a child, and to her dissatisfaction with her role as a housewife. The

depression was triggered at different times by Christine's physical illnesses and by the physical and emotional exhaustion she experienced as a full-time mother/wife/homemaker and part-time paid worker who put her husband through school. Christine saw a variety of different therapists during these years and her therapeutic experiences varied from highly constructive to highly destructive. She initially sought help (after she'd broken her back and found herself emotionally distraught) from a female psychiatrist who helped her to "explore my past and express my sadness." A series of moves led to her involvement with a variety of social workers: a blind, male social worker who helped her "by being so nice and setting an example," another social worker (female) who helped her cope with constant ill health and surgeries and who eventually became a friend, and a third social worker (female) who helped her cope with her son's difficult behavior and her own frustrations. Most helpful of all was her involvement with a feminist psychologist (female) whom Christine believes to have helped her in a number of ways. She explains:

> She really turned my head around.... really enabled me to express all the sadness and pain I had felt in my past.... showed me what was going on down deep inside.... and was a strong woman and just by her example I think she helped me.

Prior to this, however, Christine had an experience with a male psychiatrist which she now understands to have been sexual harassment. She stopped seeing him, angry that a person in a trustworthy position from whom she was seeking help would abuse his position and be the source of further distress for her. Christine explained that she was sorry later that she never reported him, but didn't feel she could go through the hassle it would involve, feeling sure it would result in a battle – his word against hers.

Mary has mixed feelings about the therapists she saw when she was in the process of separating from her husband. She felt understood and supported by a female psychiatrist who put her on Elavil (an antidepressant) and sent her to a social worker for therapy. Mary was not particularly pleased with the social worker (also female), whom she believes inaccurately diagnosed her as wanting to be put on a pedestal and as having married someone like her father. However, she continued seeing her because she admired her bluntness. Jean feels positive about the

therapist she saw for career and supportive counselling while she was a university student. He was a student, too, and she liked him and indeed did feel supported. At the same time she is aware that he told her what to do – provided solutions and made decisions for her.

Elizabeth has a long history of seeing psychiatrists in relation to her depression, which began in childhood, was suppressed in nursing, was compounded in Vietnam and which eventually grew out of control during her marriage and after her hysterectomy. Elizabeth's experience with psychiatrists has been largely negative. She recalls that they believed she had either fantasized or provoked her father's incestuous behavior. Not until 1980, at the age of 40, when she heard a radio program on incest and phoned the Rape Crisis Center for information did she encounter the idea that she was a "victim" of incest and that "it was not my fault." All of her life she had believed she was the "guilty one" – a belief reinforced by about 20 psychiatrists (all male). Elizabeth also believes her experience with psychiatrists to have been destructive in that they refused to accept her interpretation of her distress, diagnosed and treated her on the basis of their medical categories of "illness," assumed her to be unlike themselves (i.e., not normal), and avoided dealing with the situational factors that were contributing to her depression, such as her Vietnam War experience, her career crisis, her marriage, her hysterectomy, etc. Elizabeth was caught in a bind: she desperately needed treatment, yet her interpretation of her experience was denied. When she dared to disagree with the psychiatrists she was labelled uncooperative and dishonest. Yet these were the experts, the people she had been taught to respect and whom she wanted to trust. She felt discredited, humiliated and degraded. Psychologists were not any more helpful to Elizabeth than were the psychiatrists. Some psychologists who were leaders of an outpatient therapy group insisted, as had the psychiatrists, that Elizabeth fit her experience and problems to their theories. They encouraged her to tell her lover that she could not be responsible for him and that she believed he could take care of himself. She did as she was instructed and the lover committed suicide. Another psychologist, a leader of a gestalt encounter group which Elizabeth became involved in when still married,

took advantage of her sexually when she was very vulnerable. She was not surprised and did not blame him, having learned at a young age that men could not be trusted to be responsible. During the time of the interview, Elizabeth was seeing a feminist psychologist (female) whom she said she respected. This therapist had taught her to pay attention to her own feelings and value her own experiences, she explained. Elizabeth is now beginning to see herself as valid and the world as crazy, instead of vice-versa.

4. The Catholic Church: Nuns, Priests, and Doctrine:

Four of the 13 women spoke of how nuns, priests and church doctrine or church attendance had affected their lives. The impact of the nuns who taught Elizabeth both in grade school and at university has already been discussed. What has not yet been discussed is the impact on Elizabeth of church doctrine, specifically, what she describes as the Catholic notion of self-sacrifice and placing oneself secondary to the common good. These ideas were particularly meaningful to her insofar as she felt that her suffering from too much responsibility, emotional neglect and sexual abuse in her family had some ultimate meaning, and that some day she would be rewarded for her suffering. Thus her religious beliefs helped Elizabeth to survive a family life which was otherwise devastating. The ideas of suffering and of the common good are still important to Elizabeth today. She believes that the "me first" philosophy of many humanistic psychologists is selfish, and further believes that she has learned and continues to learn from her own suffering. On the negative side, however, Elizabeth has learned that the church-supported idea of large families is less than ideal because in a large family it is impossible for parents to find the time and energy to take care of everyone's emotional needs. She herself was not aware of an emotional dimension to life until she went away to university and read about it, and for many years she understood it only intellectually. Upon her return from Vietnam, Elizabeth experienced difficulty with institutionalized religion when she found priests unable to speak to her about the things she found disturbing. They were more interested in their parishoners' sex lives than with the issues of war and politics, she explains. Consequently, Elizabeth moved away from the church insofar as she no longer relies on the

church to interpret reality for her or to make decisions for her. She does find the Catholic mass and ritual spiritually satisfying, however.

Heidi refers to her religious training as a child as something she appreciates – she perceives herself as having benefited from her regular attendance at church with her family in her community and as having gained a strength which later enabled her to survive a disasterous marriage. When married, Heidi was forbidden by her husband to go to church or to have her children baptized in her church. He also forbade her to see her friends who attended church. This upset Heidi a great deal. Now that she has divorced her husband, Heidi takes great pleasure in her freedom to attend church again. Sally briefly "turned to religion" when her husband was killed, looking for answers about the meaning of life and death. She found the priests' answers very unsatisfactory, however, and decided she'd have to find her own answers. Denise discussed the power of priests over women in partial answer to the question, "What do you think of this saying: 'It's a man's world?'" She explains how in her mother's day, priests and ministers expected and advised women to be submissive to their husbands, encouraging them to put the welfare of their husbands and children first. It was the duty of women, they taught, to sacrifice themselves in order to please their husbands and make their marriages work. In Denise's words: "and if you ever went to them with a problem, you always had to be the one to submit, submit, submit to the male, and make it work." Based on her own experience, Denise has decided that the Catholic ideas regarding birth control and divorce are not valid, and she is not afraid to tell anyone, even a priest, she maintains.

5. Other professionals and policies:

When she was in the process of determining her legal rights prior to leaving her husband, Heidi dealt with two lawyers. The first (a female) was helpful insofar as she explained to Heidi her dower rights and assisted her in filing a caveat against her husband. She was unhelpful, however, in that she did not seem to understand the seriousness of Heidi's situation (i.e., that Heidi was being beaten and her life threatened) and advised her on different occasions to "stand up for yourself" and try marriage counselling. Heidi was referred by the first lawyer to a

divorce lawyer (male) who was much more helpful. He advised her about practical actions she could take – putting money in a separate bank account and finding a place to live – emphasizing she must think of herself and do what is best for her. With support from this lawyer Heidi left her husband and eventually got a divorce and was awarded half of the family properties. She benefited from the New Alberta Property Act of 1980 which recognized that she deserved half of the family property. About the law coming into effect prior to her divorce she states, "It was really good that the Property Act came when it came. I think it should have been done long ago."

That Joan experiences a hesitancy on the part of business people to "do business" with a woman (i.e., buy or sell commercial real estate from a female salesperson) was already discussed in the previous chapter. That she was ridiculed when she began her own tile installation business was also discussed. Further, Joan expects that bankers would hesitate to lend her money to start a business as a housing contractor. Thus, it is Joan's perception that she is allowed to be successful in the business world only to a degree – that barriers still exist which prevent women from entering a field dominated by males.

Denise spoke highly of former employees who were helpful to and respectful of her. However, she has experienced a particular kind of abuse as a secretary, from men in higher positions within the structural hierarchy of an institution who have treated her with disrespect or blamed her for their mistakes. She thinks it is common that secretaries (who are mostly women) are abused in this way (usually by men). Further, it is her experience from working 14 years as a secretary that whereas men will often not own up to their mistakes, women will. Denise has also experienced discrimination because of her age – being treated as "just an old lady" by a young male teacher. The assumption that being older also means one is incapable and therefore *should* retire was also experienced with difficulty by Beret, who experienced much stress after her retirement from teaching. (She told the story of another female teacher who had suffered a nervous breakdown upon her retirement, stating that she could understand why.)

Theresa is concerned with government policy which discriminates against women. Specifically, she is incensed that single mothers have been forced by the government to go off welfare and go out to work for a minimum wage to support their children, while the fathers are permitted to assume no responsibility (financial or emotional) for their children. Theresa is also concerned about women stuck in unhealthy marriages who cannot afford to raise their children on the low wages women make. Further, she is concerned about government policy which limits educational opportunities for women. Developing the potential of women is obviously not a government priority, she has learned. That attempting to change policy that is unfair to women can result in disaster for women, however, is evidenced from the experience of Marcela, who lost her job while attempting to change union policy concerning women and sexual harassment.

Social Norms and Generational Cohort

Social norms reflecting the values of a particular generation living as children or adults in particular historical moments (decades) were discussed by some of the women in relation to education, working outside of the home, marriage and child care. Awareness of social norms is evidenced as women describe what they *should* or *shouldn't* be or do, what was *expected*, what they were *supposed to* do or be, what *was done* or *wasn't done*, what *everyone was doing*, etc.

1. Education, Work and Marriage:

Beret and Denise discuss how, in their farming communities in the 1920s and 1930s, it was common that girls were given more education than boys, because boys were needed to work on the farms and would eventually inherit them. Both women received more education than their brothers (with the exception of one of Denise's six brothers who "hungered for education"). Further, both women spoke of their parents valuing education and encouraging them to get as much formal education as they could. Although social norms of the 1940s and 1950s decreed that married women remain at home, both Denise and Beret were exempted from this expectation as a consequence of the war. Heidi, who lived in Germany in the 1940s and 1950s, was expected to work to earn a dowry for her future marriage. It was customary for girls to buy their furniture and linens before

they were married, she explains, because wedding gifts were only small and inexpensive items.

In the 1950s and 1960s, when education was more widely available to everyone, the factors influencing how much education the participants received appears to largely reflect their family's values and specific economic situation rather than a social norm. Christine's parents' attitude was that she didn't need an education because she would only get married. The assumption that there was no need for a woman to have an education seems also to have been made by Joan's and Madelaine's parents, since neither received encouragement to achieve at school. A different message – that education could be used to better one's positon in life – was received by Elizabeth, Mary and Marcela. In all cases, it was the mothers and not the fathers who encouraged their daughters to be educated. Elizabeth recalls how her mother helped her with her homework and seemed to vicariously experience her academic achievements. Mary was encouraged to go to university by her mother (who had not completed her education due to World War II and marriage) and also by her grandparents (whom whe described as upwardly mobile). Marcela recalls that even though she respected her father's creative mind and despised her mother's orientation to the business world, it was her mother who encouraged her to achieve at university and who now praises her successes. Differential messages from mothers and fathers were also received by Jean and Alice, whose fathers wanted them to be married and whose mothers encouraged them to work and be independent. Yet, underlying or along with the message to get an education, work or be independent there appears also to be a message to get married. As was just stated, although Jean and Alice's mothers encouraged work and independence, their fathers spoke of marriage. Further, Alice's mother assumed marriage was inevitable, and actually advised Alice to delay marriage for awhile and to go out into the world and do things *first* . The underlying messsage Mary received was to get an education so that she could find a "better" husband. Thus it appears that, directly or indirectly, women were encouraged to be married. Marriage was assumed to be the inevitable if not ideal state, and education was considered to be either not necessary at all, a means to independence from the

family, a means to delaying marriage or a means for making a "better" marriage. In fact, when marriage did not take place, as in the case of Alice and Jean, the women were judged (especially by their aunts) to be deviant or failures as women, reflecting the social norm that to be successful women must marry, and that their success in their careers is less important.

2. Childcare and Maternal Love

The idea that women *should* stay home and care for their children is common across all generations of women in this study. However, the rules governing the norm and the attitudes toward women who follow or break the rule seems to change over time. Beret and Denise both assumed in the 1940s that they would not work after they were married and had children – this *was not done.* Circumstances related to World War II exempted them from this "rule," as will be explained in the section, "Cultural/Political Factors."

The reasons given by women as to why they felt they *should* stay home with their children in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s reflects the attitude that the morally correct choice is for mothers to stay home. Madelaine stayed home with her children, even though she was frustrated and unhappy, because it was *supposed to be* her responsibility. Joan assumed full–time child care responsibilities, even though it made her unhappy and depressed, to please her husband, "for the good of the children" and because her friends were all doing it so it must be right. After first working to put her husband through school, Christine made a career of being "Superwoman" – clean house, clean kids, perfect hostess, etc. – because that was her only perceived alternative. Mary is staying home with her children today because it is she, the mother and wife, who is *expected* to sacrifice her career for the good of the family. Her refusal to do this would mean suffering much guilt, worse for her than the conflict she now suffers. That the *right thing to do* takes precedence over the woman's satisfaction for a considerable length of time at least is evidenced in the cases of Madelaine, Joan, Christine and Mary. Further, that the *right thing to do* takes precedence over reality is evidenced in the case of Denise, who even though she was forced to be a working mother, maintains that women who do not make a career of caring for

their children are neglecting them.

The idea that women *naturally* love children has been an issue for four women, three of whom have children and one of whom does not. Joan questions that she has the "maternal instinct" she thinks she *should* have, because she prefers to work outside of her home. Madelaine feels inadequate because she does not feel the kind of love toward her children that she thinks she *should*. Sally questioned her love for her child as she struggled to win her respect, trust and cooperation, when she became a widow at age 18 and was suddenly forced to assume full responsibility for parenting. Alice experiences as a burden the expectation that she *should* like other people's children.

E. Cultural/Political Factors and Meaning

There seem to be broad factors from the cultural/political dimension which have affected the lives of the women interviewed in basic and significant ways. These broad factors provide a background against which social and individual factors must be perceived if we are to fully understand the women's experiences. They will be discussed under the following headings:

1. Geophysical Setting
2. Cultural Differences
3. Political/Economic Forces
4. Cultural/Political Ideology

Geophysical Setting

Living in a rural area was a significant factor in the childhood of six women in the study (Beret, Denise, Theresa, Madelaine, Jean and Sally), remains significant for three of these women in adulthood (Beret, Theresa and Madelaine) and was significant for Christine for several years during her adulthood. Beret describes how her parents decided to immigrate first from Sweden to Chicago and finally to rural Alberta, looking for a chance to start a new life in a country that offered freedom and opportunity. She feels lucky to have the freedom she experiences and the quality of life obtainable in a country with rich resources and low population. She values that she has worked on the land, learned that she is strong and capable of hard work and that country living provides

her with healthy food to eat and clean air to breath. She also values the privacy and peace she experiences walking through fields and woods on her farm, and the sense of cooperation and caring she has experienced since childhood in her surrounding rural community. Like Beret, Theresa too has worked on a farm, both as a child and as an adult, and has experienced herself as capable and strong. Today she values the peace and tranquility she experiences while walking by the lake on her farmland, and the luxury of sitting alone on a sandy beach for a few hours to collect her thoughts or calm a migraine headache. Similarly, Christine values the years she lived in the country, first on a commune and then in her own house. Like Beret and Theresa, she worked on the farm and learned that she was strong and able to look after herself. In her words:

> So it was really an experience of living off your skills and that really showed me that I could survive in this world. So I mean if I could do it there, I could do it anywhere.

Living in the country also taught Christine a faith in human nature that she has brought with her back to the city. She explains:

> It kind of gave me a faith in human nature and in mankind that things were going to continue, the world was not going to end tomorrow. I just learned that from being in touch with nature and seeing how it rejunvenates itself. We can do the same thing for ourselves.

Madelaine, who grew up in rural Northern Alberta, has returned to rural Northern life on a "hobby farm" after living fifteen years in the city. She has mixed feelings about her lifestyle. On one hand she values the beauty and peacefulness of the surrounding countryside, and the freedom she feels in Canada generally. On the other hand, she has felt lonely and isolated, experienced difficulty getting to know and be accepted by the people in her rural community, and perceives the community as generally closed to outsiders. This was also the experience of Jean, who grew up on a farm. She experienced farmlife as isolating, as reinforcing the timid, withdrawn personalities of her parents and siblings as well as herself, and as compounding the emotional insecurities she had developed. The feelings of insecurity and social alienation that Jean experienced had a severe impact on her as a child and remain with her today. She explains:

> I feel so clumsy. I feel so unskilled. I feel like the combination of the isolation of the farm and then the isolation of my teenage years which was self-imposed, totally self-imposed - like I feel, and I have always felt, that I can never catch up.....I'm always going to be straight off the farm, aged 12, the only kid in school who wears braided hair and doesn't have clothes like anybody else.

Denise, who also grew up on a farm, did not learn that she was capable from living on the farm, per se (her brothers did the farm work as did Madelaine's and Jean's), nor did she feel restricted or isolated. She witnessed how life on a farm with many children to care for restricted her mother's activities and choices. She was told directly by her mother that women should have choices about how many children to have and what to work at, that "You should maybe try to do something else" and "Go out and do better." This message, combined with her parents' valuing of education and belief in womens' right to equality, inspired Denise to leave the farm and establish a life for herself in the city, confident of her ability to make a place for herself in the world and to achieve whatever she put her mind to.

Cultural Differences

Being different from the dominant culture by virtue of ethnic background or recent immigration was a significant factor in the lives of five of the 13 women interviewed. Specifically, the consequences of being other than a member of the dominant culture were low status, lack of knowledge of language and rights, not being understood, being otherwise disadvantaged or experiencing cultural conflict.

1. Minority Group Status, Ethnicity and Tradition:

Being a member of an ethnic group with minority status, a child growing up in the southern United States who was a dark-eyed, dark-haired Hispanic instead of a blue-eyed, blonde Anglo, was a difficult experience for Mary. The Hispanic people were typically working class, lived on the wrong side of the tracks in the barrios and attended the Spanish-speaking Catholic church. Mary's family lived in the barrios but wanted to not remain poor and consciously strove for upward mobility. They set themselves apart from the Hispanics by joining the wealthy and WASP Presbyterian Church. Mary mixed with the Anglo kids at school because she was in the honor society, the band and other clubs. She recalls that she and the other Hispanic girls all aspired to the WASP world, wanted to speak without a Spanish accent and wanted to be blondes. She explains:

> They were cool, but I was just a meatball in high school. And a part of it was because of being ethnic. I wanted to be in that world so badly. And my parents probably made me want it in certain ways because they set themselves apart sometimes too, from the rest of the neighbors. They didn't socialize with anybody. They always made a big fuss over the gang at the other church. It was something that they subconsciously

wanted us to have.

How much of Mary's insecurity stems from her early experience of not being part of the desired, dominant group is hard to say. She is clear, however, that her fears about speaking out in classes at university were related to the inferiority feelings she developed as a child. She is also clear that in social situations today her feeling shy and lacking confidence relates to her childhood experiences.

Being a part of an extended family whose celebrations and rituals centered around their East European traditions had a significant impact on Marcela. Being the only female child in the family, she was expected to convene and perform at family gatherings (and at festivals in the ethnic community) – experiences which gave her confidence to achieve in the larger community. Like Mary's parents, Marcela's parents were striving for upward mobility. For Marcela's mother this involved attending to issues outside of the ethnic community, although Marcela realizes now that this does not mean that her mother dismisses the ethnic community and its virtures. Marcela's father does reject his ethnicity, however, pretending instead that he is "part of the Canadian, Anglo–Saxon ruling class." He has critically judged Marcela's decisions to change residence or change careers as her being a gypsy (which is unacceptable). Marcela, herself, values her ethnic heritage and recapturing it has become central to her life. Like so many other second–generation Canadians from East European countries, she has been actively involved in studying historical and contemporary aspects of East European culture, travelling to countries of her origin and becoming politically active in ethnic organizations at the local, national and international levels.

Sally's Metis heritage has undoubtedly had an impact on her life experiences, although she did not refer to this directly. Perhaps being from a small town where there is a high proportion of Metis, French and Cree Indians in the general population, she saw her heritage as unremarkable. It may have been that Sally did not talk about her ethnicity because she was not conscious of how it has affected her – that she sees the problems she has experienced as personal rather than as cultural or political. It may be, too, that Sally simply did not relate her experience as a Metis to the initial question, "What has it meant to you as a woman?" However, that Sally's father's being a trapper, and consequently being

away from home for long periods of time in the winter, affects her life today is evidenced in her discussion of her conflict with her mother. She describes how, as soon as her father leaves for his trapline, her mother comes to stay with her, frightened to be alone.

2. Immigration:

Being a new immigrant to Canada was significant to Heidi for a number of reasons. Most significant probably is the fact of her having no family in Canada to turn to for support when she was being abused by her husband. Further, she saw for herself no alternative but to stay in her marriage because she had no friends in Canada to turn to, and did not know about the welfare system. Thus, without family or friends and without knowledge of social services available to her, she was without choice. She describes her predicament:

> And I said, 'If there was a bridge that goes back home across the ocean, I would walk on that bridge and never come back, if he ever done that to me again.' I said, "I'm not a dog that you just can kick around whenever you feel like it.' But I knew I didn't have no choice. My parents, my sister and brother, they are in Germany; they couldn't help me. And I didn't have anybody to go to. And I never had heard of welfare so I didn't have anybody to go to. So where are you going to go with two little kids? I don't have no friends or no relatives. So I just had to take and take it and take it.

Being an immigrant and not knowing Canadian law was an added difficulty for Heidi in that it allowed her husband to convince her that he was entitled to throw her out of the house if she did not please him. Only after a lawyer advised her of her Dower Rights did Heidi understand that her husband did not have the kind of power he claimed was rightfully his. Not knowing the English language inhibited Heidi insofar as she initially was unable to explain her problems to English-speaking people. Further, when her husband was laid off from work and she was required to work to support the family, she had to take low-paying jobs in clothing factories. Not knowing the language and her rights also meant not being able to complain about working conditions. Heidi explains:

> And in Canada you had to work hard because you couldn't speak the language so you didn't have the right or the opportunity to complain. And you were glad of every penny that you got paid. So you had to work hard. I worked again on assembly line, like in a factory here in Toni Lynn, in GWG, in Reynolds. You got paid by the piece. And even if you worked as hard as you could, you hardly could make any money because it was so poorly paid.

We have already determined in the above sections how being the children of immigrants has affected Beret and Marcela in positive ways. Themselves being immigrants from the United States seems to have affected both Mary and Elizabeth in a conflicting way. Mary talks about feeling alienated from both the American and Canadian political scenes. She misses her family still in the United States and wishes they could be nearer, yet feels that Edmonton is now her home and she would not like to leave. Elizabeth found being a new Canadian difficult in that no one understood, at the time she emigrated, the depression she was experiencing as a result of her nursing experiences in the Vietnam War. Today she feels glad to be living apart from the American political scene but misses the familiarity of the American culture in which she grew up. She is disturbed by the anti-American feeling she perceives in many Canadians.

Political/Economic Forces

I. The Depression of the 1930s:

Two women, Beret and Denise, directly experienced the Depression as children on Alberta farms. For Beret, the experience was not particularly significant in that her family was not affected severely – her parents supplemented the farm income by taking on additional paid work, and there were only three children to be fed. Further, being frugal, not wasting anything and sharing with less fortunate people had always been a matter of course in Beret's family, so the Depression did not require a change of lifestyle. In contrast, Denise was more strongly affected. Schools were shut down and her family could not afford to send the children to town by bus or to buy the new, condensed books ordered by Premier Aberhart. Denise had to quit school and abandon her plans to become a nurse. However, while her brothers were expected to work to help support the large family, Denise and her sister were alternately sent to live with their grandmother for one or two years to receive schooling from the nuns at a French convent. She was 18 years old when the school finally re-opened, and she returned then to take grade nine and high school. Denise also remembers being a young teenager and "longing for new clothes instead of patches," and looking forward to a time when she "could have a nice paying job and be nicely dressed."

In this sense, she feels that the Depression gave her a determination to put herself in a position that would insure she would not be deprived again. However, it didn't make her "money-hungry," she explains. Rather it made her "stronger" and she learned to find happiness in personal relationships, to appreciate the value of being resourceful and to care about and share with those less fortunate than herself.

2. World War II:

World War II significantly affected the lives of five of the 13 participants - three directly and two indirectly. Heidi was the most directly affected because she was living at the time in German-occupied Czechoslovakia. Under the German government she recalls there was enough to eat, the schools were operating, everyone had work, and she was happy. In 1943 she finished grade eight at the local school and, being a top student, planned to attend high school in the city. However, the people who were to board her could not take her at the last minute because they were required to take in wounded soldiers instead. Heidi's academic training came to an abrupt halt. At the end of the war, the Czechoslovakian government took over and Heidi lived under marshall law for a year and a half. She and the people of her community were required to wear white armbands ("with a black 'N' for Nazi"), were forbidden to wear German clothing or to speak German, and were not allowed to buy food. Eventually they were taken to concentration camps prior to being expelled to Germany. At this point Heidi's family separated because they could not find accomodation for five people. Heidi began working, at age 17, in a butcher shop, and there she met two girlfriends from similar situations who became her life-long friends.

The impact of World War II on Denise was extremely negative and caused her great pain. Her husband, whom she loved deeply, joined the army and was killed at the end of the war. Denise was left a widow with a small son to raise. She never learned how or where exactly her husband was killed, as she explains:

> We really never got the whole truth of it because you get your war telegrams and your information and there's no way to get to the bottom of it. So you just kind of have to forget about what happened. It's the War Secrets Act.

Adjusting to her husband's death was a painful and difficult experience which meant to her a great personal loss and the end of her plans for the future. She

lived as a widow for ten years, assuming responsiblility as a single parent for both the financial and emotional support of her infant son. Consequently, her life outside of her home became restricted to achieving security and success in her work and she felt supported by men and resented by women.

World War II meant to Beret a chance to pursue her career as a teacher, which ordinarily was not granted to married women. The war resulted in a teacher shortage in her community and Beret was approached to fill the need. It was arranged that Beret's youngest daughter would be cared for by her husband or a neighbour. Thereby, with her husband's and the community's support, she resumed her teaching career. By the time the teacher shortage was no longer a problem, Beret acknowledged the importance to her of her career and found other reasons to continue teaching. Thus the immediate effect of war on Beret was a positive one.

Mary and Jean referred to the effect of World War II on their mothers' lives – effects which they experienced indirectly. Mary's mother left college to marry, pressured by the war to follow the man she loved to his army base. She was soon pregnant and in three years had three children. Mary states that her feelings and memories of her mother are vague. However, the effect on Mary of her mother's experience seems to have been twofold. On the negative side, Mary was subject in her early years to the tensions of a tired mother living a poor life in a crowded apartment, a situation directly related to the country being at war. On the positive side, she is grateful that her mother "steered" her to college and provided a model of a woman who always had her own income after her children were in school. Unfortunately, Mary also learned she must limit her choice of career to something "steady, safe and secure" like teaching, a career which gave her no satisfaction. Jean's mother was originally "saved by the war" in that it provided her with an opportunity to leave home and the unhappiness she experienced working on her family farm. She joined the army immediately and "split for the East." However, within six months she met Jean's father, married, immediately became pregnant and "was stuck back on the farm." Thus it seems that like Mary's mother, Jean's mother must have felt pressured by the war to marry

and begin a family despite economic hardships. Jean's early experience was similar to Mary's – child of a mother stressed by too many children, by poverty and by the insecurities brought by the war. Jean also felt the effects of a father being away at war and a mother left alone to care for the children and manage the farm. Emotional support and security was a luxury not available to Jean and her brothers under these circumstances.

3. The Vietnam War:

Elizabeth experienced the Vietnam War directly as a nurse who felt it her duty as an American to offer her professional services to the war effort and who looked forward to the challenge of nursing in Vietnam. Experiencing the horrors of war weakened her emotionally, however, and made her more vulnerable to stress. She is just now, in fact, ten years after her Vietnam experience, coming to terms with it. While the Vietnam War was a personally devastating experience for Elizabeth, it also politicized her. She began to understand that the people she saw dying had no power to make decisions about the war, and she witnessed that the people with power to make decisions did not care about the young soldier boys and innocent victims who were being killed. Back in the United States, depressed and confused, Elizabeth's usual source of strength and inspiration, the Catholic church, was not speaking to the problem of war. Consequently she turned to Eastern religion and meditation, classical music and the underground Anti-Vietnam War Movement as a means of coming to terms with her experience.

4. The Current Threat of Nuclear Disaster:

Three of the women interviewed talked about the current threat of nuclear war and how this affects them. Elizabeth explains that she feels powerless to have an impact on the world scene and experiences personal conflict as a result.

> I feel powerless, I think, in terms of the world scene. I think things are deteriorating. I feel powerless to make any difference in that deterioration. When I think about trying to spend my energy to make a change, I think I'll have to give all my energy to that. And I think I go through periods when I actually do that. ...And then I realize after a few months it's not making any difference. ...I think the multi-nationals are very, very strong. They will remain in power and what do you do with that? ...And then I think, 'Well, if everybody thinks that way, then we aren't going to have any improvement on the world scene.' But I read the statistics – most of the world is third world, most of the population is the third world countries, living at a very primitive level – that the rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer. And the nuclear

> potential increases by billions of dollars every year, and is constantly being upgraded so we can kill more people faster. And the chemical warfare is developing to new heights of sophistication, not to mention biological warfare. It's insane! You know? It really is insane. And I don't feel capable of doing anything about it.

Elizabeth believes that people assume responsibility for raising their own consciousness about political reality. She discusses her own belief that the possibility of war relates to a mentality which values power and competition, the fact of men having control in ways that women generally do not. (Denise also believes that men are preoccupied with power to the point of willingly sacrificing human lives to achieve it. This is not the way women solve problems, she maintains. She stated, "If women ruled the world, there would be no war. They would find a way around it.")

Like Elizabeth, Jean too feels powerless about the world scene and her ability to have any impact on it. She states:

> I feel occasionally powerless in the face of man's inexorable progress towards destruction. I think that the human race is not long for this world and I don't know what to do about that. I guess you just live your life and hope for the best, basically.

Jean explains that her tendency typically is to remain uninvolved politically because she believes that as her opinion "filters through the system," it loses its effect. Thus, she consciously remains uninvolved in the polical system:

> I'm one of the many who feel that they don't have any political power and that there's nothing that they can really do to change either law or government or society or any of that big stuff, and consequently don't tend to go out and do it.

Instead Jean tries to live her life as an example to the people immediately around her, of a person who in her private and professional life can be kind and moral. (Similarly, Denise believes that although she doesn't have power in the public sense, she can by her own example affect people's lives.)

As is the case with Elizabeth and Jean, Mary's reaction to the current world scene – to "political events..., invasions, wars, disasters" is to feel powerless. She feels that she doesn't have the energy or the inclination to be politically active or to effect change on a level other than the personal. Further, she perceives herself as "a small cog" in a big machine that takes over, and that even political candidates (who "tend to be basically alike"), have little power to control events. Mary feels sad about feeling powerless and being inactive, however, attributing her lack of

involvement to her own inability fo feel in control of any aspect of her life.

Cultural/Political Ideology

Ideas about the nature of women and their place in society are related to particular philosophies and values about the social/ political order. Three different and in some ways conflicting ideologies appear to be represented in the discussions of the 13 women interviewed. How the women interpret these ideologies and their manifestations in society and how they are affected by them will be outlined under the following headings:

1. Patriarchal Ideology
2. Democratic Ideology
3. Feminist Ideology

Extensive quoting will be used to illustrate women's consciousness of an ideology, how they perceive an ideology to be manifest and what it means to them personally.

1. Patriarchal Ideology:

In answer to the question, "What do you think of this saying: 'It's a man's world'?" and in answer to various other questions as well, the thirteen women interviewed discussed their interpretation of and/or reaction to the idea of male power in the public sphere, the lack of recognition and valuing of women's contribution to society and their awareness of women being restricted in society and being assumed to be inferior. Six women, (Joan, Theresa, Jean, Marcela, Denise and Elizabeth) discussed the "fact" of men historically and/or currently having formal positions of public power and thus control of the decision-making process, almost exclusively. Marcela perceives the dominance of male power as an historical truth, signifying it as basic to the foundations of society.

> It really is the way things are. And this is simple, historical truth. Everybody knows that important decisions, international, national, political, economic and everything else, are decided by men and have been for approximately 4000 centuries, which means we live in a world where the foundations have been rather firmly established.

Theresa's response focuses on a consequence of men dominating positions of power – that the ideas and structures of society represent only a male perspective.

> Yeah, I think that's pretty accurate, all in all. Canada has never seen a woman prime minister. Courts or the laws are all set by men. There's been very little done about that. Judges – how many women judges do we have? An odd number but very few. Most companies are – the boss or the head person is a man. So like all of the thinking and all of the way things are structured, had to be the male point of view, because there are women in so few of those positions. How else can it be?

Jean makes a similar statement about men historically having had public power, economically, politically, etc. The degree to which male power permeates society and people's thinking was something she discovered on a Opportunities for Youth project working on non–sexist educational materials. She explains:

> And when I was working on that project I actually came to realize what sexist educational materials were. And that they weren't vile or horrible. Like nobody was trying to bend the minds of children. But I realized during that era how things that are just so innocuous looking do bend the minds of children. And bend the minds of adults. And it's not the single incident, it's the constant hammering that makes things stay the way they are. It's the television commercials – I mean for every television commercial that is a blatant, obvious example of sexism, there are hundreds that are subtle, not at all obvious examples of sexism. And it's the same with everything that we read, and everything that we have always taken for granted. It's the little things that add up, it's the little things that everybody does and says in their lives that add up, and it makes a difference. And you have to start thinking in a certain mode before you recognize those things and you say, 'Hey! Just a minute! Do you realize what you just said? And what I just said?' Even now I miss all kinds of stuff.

Sally and Mary speak not to the historical fact of official male dominance but to the injustice of the situation. Sally states:

> I don't think that's fair because it's not only a man that's got to live in it. Women do too. I don't think that's a fair saying at all because women have to go through just as much as men do, probably more.

The assumption that women's unique capacity for bearing children detracts from their ability to think, reason, and work, Sally thinks might be the basis of women's subordination to men. She wonders about men's motivation to maintain the status quo.

> But we are different in ways such as women bear children and men can't do that. But men can probably do everything else a woman can do and women can probably do everything a man can do. But because of that difference it seems that a lot of men figure that's all women are good for. I don't think we should be thought of in that way, because there are other jobs women can do just as well as men. I wonder if – it seems like men just don't want to understand the women's needs. Is it just because they're not interested, or is it because they're afraid we're going to get up there and be number one?

Like Sally, Mary sees an injustice being done to women insofar as society is structured such that males benefit and women experience conflict. Specifically,

she perceives that men are generally free of family and household responsibilities to take their *rightful* place in the public sphere, supported by their wives. Women, on the other hand, face having to choose between a career and a family since society is structured on the assumption that women will provide total care for their children and manage the private sphere. Thus, like Sally, Mary perceives the social subordination to be related to women's biological difference from men. She states:

> I think it's 80 percent true. Mainly because I think that women either are biologically forced to do something – they have to have children in the family – or they just decide never to have children. And so if they have career ambitions they have to negate a side of themselves to do it. ... I think that it's easy for men to go out and be successes if they have support at home, and it's harder for women. That's why I think it's 80 percent true. And it always will be unless there are incredible advances in day care, where you can have a baby and know that you're going to leave it with someone who's trained; that the child won't be stuck in a hallway with three other kids, with somebody watching TV all day. Unless that happens, and I don't see it happening for a while, women are just going to have to do it themselves or else go out and do it at the expense of their family lives or themselves.

Being forced to choose between a family and a career, or suffering the consequences of attempting both is one manifestation of a society structured according to patriarchal ideology. Another manifestation, perceived by Jean, is a restriction on choice (for both women and men) according to the dictates of sex-role ideology. Restrictions occur, Jean thinks, because *somebody* feels their position is threatened and doesn't trust that people will naturally select what they are capable of doing. She states:

> I want to have choices. I've always wanted to have choices. I wanted – even if I made mistakes, I wanted to choose my own mistakes. I didn't want to be told what to do by men or anyone else. And I wanted to be able to look at things to see whether I wanted to do them or not. So I have resisted, and I resist on behalf of all women, restrictions on what they can and can't do. I think women should be able to do anything they want to do. ... But everybody should have the right to choose. What I resent is the idea that women can only do these things and men can only do those things, and that they should either be incapable or unhappy doing any of the other things. That's crazy! ... I think that everybody should have the choice. Because what bothers me about restrictions is, if there are restrictions it's because somebody feels their position is threatened. It's because they don't believe that things are going to sort out in the most natural fashion. ... People are going to sort out, and so they shouldn't be told, "You can't become an ophthalmic surgeon because you're a woman." ... People are going to choose what they're good at and what they're happy doing and what they're successful doing.

In addition to commenting on the historical fact of male dominance and the

consequent restrictions on choice and opportunity for women, Jean rejects patriarchal ideology in its evaluation of women as subordinate to and less valuable than men. She believes that women do make valuable contributions to society, contributions upon which the men in power and the human race generally depend. She further believes that although women may not have formal power, they do have personal power which has enabled them to survive and be strong in the face of injustice. In her words:

> I have never thought that women have no place. I know damned well that the world wouldn't work without them, and that women, even in their most powerless circumstances which do and always have existed everywhere, that women have power anyway just because they have strength. They have always believed that they have a responsibility to the race, certain kinds of responsibility, and against great odds they manage to carry it out. Most of which – like the greatest responsibility has to do with nurturance of children and of men and of each other and of the world, and trying to see that the men pay attention to it, that the nurturance of all kinds doesn't get forgotten. And I think that though women may not have – they don't control the outer arena, they control the humming center. And if it didn't hum, basically, if the center didn't keep being in there going, the nucleus in the cell, there wouldn't be anything going on out there.

Three other women, Beret, Heidi, and Denise, responded in like manner to the saying, "It's a man's world," rejecting it's patriarchal assumption that what women do is not worth doing. Beret states:

> But I think that women are really, well, they've always contributed a lot and they're contributing more every generation, to every way in life: to the health and to the politics and world situations and situations in the communities. I think they've always been in there but they haven't been recognized.

Heidi voices her objections to the patriarchal assumption of men's superior worth and to her particular experience of its manifestations. While her experience has taught her that men and women are expected to assume different roles and learn different skills, she nevertheless believes that she worked as hard as her husband and that in addition she assumed responsibility for the care and nurturance of her family. Thus she concludes that women should be valued equally with men.

> Oh I don't think much of that. All the years that I am as a woman I work just as hard as my husband and I don't think so. There is too much that I can do. Like he says he is always the boss and he has to look after everything and he has to see that the kids get raised right. Well, I don't think so. That's a woman's job to raise the kids and look after the household. Because from when they were small as a baby, the man never wakes up and feeds the baby and change their diapers. The woman always has to do that. And I feel the woman is the backbone of the family. That's the way I felt. And my kids thought so too. My kids

> used to say, 'If it wasn't for you Mom, our family would have been long apart.' I don't think it's just a man's world. There is certain things that a man can do maybe better, like trades people. There is a lot of work that women are not able to do in trades. As a bricklayer a man is stronger than a woman, and so maybe in several other jobs that a man can do better, but there is certain jobs that a man can't do what a woman can do better. And nowadays, the women are catching up a lot to the men's jobs. I think any office job a woman can do just as good as a man.

Denise, too, perceives that women's contribution has tended to be overlooked and that the nurturing qualities that they have developed have not been valued. She is also aware of the restrictions on women's behavior that have a moral basis.

> They're beginning to recognize the contribution women are making to the world. ... But they'd better never belittle us because it would be a mighty poor world without us. ... See, that's from away back – men do this and a woman can't. That's archaic, because what a woman can't do in public, a man shouldn't either if he respects himself.

However, the major focus of Denise's response to the saying, "It's a man's world," was that times have changed – that whereas in her mother's time women were almost totally subordinated to men, they now are gaining freedoms, opportunities, and respect. Denise often heard her mother say, "It's a man's world," and saw this was true for her mother because she was restricted in her activities, was considered less capable that men of thinking, and was treated as a subordinate by male priests and doctors. Denise also recognized that having a large number of children, as the Catholic Church dictated, restricted her mother. However, Denise's mother taught her that she did have choices – that she could choose for herself how many children to have and what kind of job to work at. Having had greater choice than did her mother, Denise believes society to have changed for the better as regards women's opportunity in the public world. Where men still dominate she personally perceives their perspectives as biased and as not necessarily representative of a global truth. She explains:

> I don't think it's a man's world to that degree. Years and years ago they did the voting, they did the thinking. You weren't allowed to speak for yourself or anything. But not so today. I think it's everybody's world. Like I think a woman, like you know, who wants to do certain things and advance herself or do most anything, can accomplish it. You know, I really don't think it's a man's world at all. Oh they do a lot of writing and a lot of editorials and everything, and writing newspapers and everything. But I have read some of it that was very biased and you know, not the best of writing. It was their opinion. And then maybe turned around and read something by a woman that was just super and very, very sensible. I don't think it's a man's world to that degree.

Denise further sees changes for women in the home relating to men's increased

involvement in child-care, their consideration of women's feelings and respect for their needs.

> I don't think it's that way anymore with young couples. Young men are definitely doing at least 50/50 to the raising of the children, helping the young working wife. They're very considerate of them getting out. And their feelings are respected. They're treated as persons. They have needs to be fulfilled too. I think that has really changed greatly. It's not a man's world. I think they've come a long way. I really do! And so it should be!

Christine, Alice, and Madelaine disagree with the saying, "It's a man's world," in much the same way as Denise because they perceive increased opportunities for women and have not consciously experienced restrictions in their own lives. Christine explains her position:

> I'm in real estate right now. And it's great! It's equal! I have a woman manager, I have a woman assistant manager, I work with 25 other women and three men. And the women are the top producers, they're just top, top, top all the time. The guys are just scrambling to keep up. The people I work with are very strong individuals. ... It has just sort of made me realize that being a woman is no problem. It doesn't hold you back at all. There's just no room for that because it's so much up to the individual. Individuals can achieve whatever they want. It doesn't matter what your sex is, it's a matter of how hard you want to work.

Similarily, Alice experiences no barriers to her own success in the restaurant business. She does concede, however, that some women might experience barriers and that others may have been socialized not to take advantage of the opportunities that do exist. Further, Alice rejects the patriarchal assumption of male superiority, explaining that her female friends and business associates "are strong and have got their shit together" whereas the males "are falling apart."

Madelaine focuses on the changes in womens' rights she has witnessed and concludes, "the woman, to me, has a lot of rights, maybe as much as the man." However, she detects in men a frustration "because they see they're losing sort of what they think they had control over ... they're losing the way they thought it was supposed to be...." As far as her own life goes, Madelaine is conscious that opportunites are available to her and that she is not confident enough to take advantage of them. This she sees as her personal failure, however, not as the result of never having been encouraged to achieve something for herself.

Whereas Madelaine focuses on why men may be threatened by the changes women are making, Denise speaks of the subtle forms of sexism that continue to

exist in the form of chauvinistic attitudes. She has noticed that although men may no longer state directly that they believe women to be inferior, their behaviour reveals this to be the case. She explains:

> It's only in the past 10 years that I have recognized male chauvanism. I never believed it before. I just thought people were using this and I never understood what it really meant. But after I became aware of it, I really did know that they were there. ... I've noticed that they really don't think that we can do things as well as they can. Or if you give an opinion, they won't even give you an answer. They can't be bothered. But the same opinion could be given by a man and he'd get into a discussion with him right away. But if it comes from a woman ... There's a lot of them like that. I didn't know that before. I didn't believe that men really thought that we were inferior to them. Now not all men, but there really are a lot of men who do think they are superior to women.

As Denise continues, she focuses on the change that has taken place in her own consciousness – that whereas at one time she was happily involved in her own life, did not notice chauvinistic behavior and assumed men thought women were capable and equal, she is now conscious of and recognizes male chauvinism around her.

> Which I didn't know really existed, because I was happy in my own life, busy with my own thing. And if anybody mentioned it, it didn't mean anything to me in the sense that I had never noticed it. I didn't believe that men thought we were inferior. Whereas today I have recognized that with some men, they won't come right out and say it, but they really do think that women are lesser than men. And they are out there. But before then I never realized, I thought they thought we were as capable as they were. I started noticing that through my work for 14 years at the school.

Sally's response to the saying "It's a man's world" is that it's "not fair." Like Denise, she recognizes the more subtle manifestations of patriarchal ideology. She is aware that women are subject to more criticism than men, that women are less respected, and that less attention is paid to what women say. She explains:

> ... women are usually put down more than men are. And that's bad, 'cause women are people too. Women and men should be treated like people, not somebody being better than somebody else. Like some men think they're better or think they can do things better. I feel maybe it's because women aren't given a chance. People don't listen to them enough, the way they listen to men. They may be treated the same but a lady can say the same thing and yet a man is going to be treated as respectable and listened to. ... You can see it all over the place.

Joan believes that the equality women have achieved is illusory and token, that change has not occured the way women would like to believe. She states:

> I think that a lot of the women that are in politics, high up in politics and high up in business – I think a lot of them are token. ... I think we're getting handed a crock of shit. I don't think that we're making the decisions that we like to think we are. They're just sort of patting us on the back and saying, 'You be nice girls and we'll let you be a manager of a bank in some little hick town that doesn't really mean a hill of beans anyway.' But I think if a woman tried to take over General Motors they might get excited about it. ... So yeah, I do think it's a man's world.

Elizabeth, who also perceives men to be still in power, believes there will be no change in the status quo because men don't want change and because women continue to support men. Following her explanation of feeling powerless to alter the deteriorating world scene she states:

> And this is what they created, this is what they want, this is what they need. I think it's insane! And I think they have control. I don't think it's going to change. I really don't. And part of the reason is I don't think enough women are out there. Like I think if all women, everywhere, refused to take care of these men who are promoting this self-destruction, it could make a difference. But I don't think they will. I think it's a man's world, yeah. Just open the newspapers. ... You hear on the radio, you hear the news as interpreted by men, talking about the fantastic thing that men are doing, in terms of insane ends. It's just all around you. They are in power you know.

2. Democratic Ideology:

Although none of the 13 women interviewed actually mentioned democracy directly, the idea of social equality was alluded to by 10 of the 13 women interviewed. For example, in answer to the question, "What do you value in your life?" Madelaine states,

> I value the freedom that we have in this country so far. We're very fortunate I think. Like that the woman has a lot of freedom here and we're very fortunate for it. I value that a lot. ... We're really a free people and there's a lot of things being done all the time to improve. If they can improve any situation for the woman, I think they're working on a lot of things.

Education was generally seen as the means by which social equality could be achieved. Beret and Denise spoke of how their parents encouraged their obtaining an education so that they could contribute to society to the best of their ability. Mary and Alice were encouraged by their mothers to gain an education so that they could achieve greater status or independence. Elizabeth, Jean, and Marcela saw going away to school and obtaining an education as the means by which they might achieve independence from their families and a place for themselves in society. Heidi made great sacrifices so that her children might have the advantages of an education. Joan spoke of wanting her daughter to be educated so that she could

achieve the professional status Joan herself had desired. Thus, the belief that an education is the means by which one can achieve social equality has been a positive motivating force for some women. However, for Joan, Christine, and Madelaine, who for various reasons (lack of encouragement and/or lack of opportunity) did not pursue an education, the democratic ideal of social equality reinforces their perception of themselves as somehow inadequate. They reason thus: I did not obtain an education, everyone has the same opportunity, therefore I am at fault. Joan refers to herself as "kind of basically lazy;" Christine refers to herself as "not very well disciplined;" and Madelaine thinks of herself "probably as a failure because I could have done a lot better in a lot of areas but I sort of sloughed off and I never had that determination." Only Theresa and Marcela remark that there is not an equal oportunity for all to be educated, and that there are real restrictions on individuals, one of those being related to gender, that prevent women from taking advantage of so-called equal opportunity.

An example of how the democratic ideology is manifest and reinforced is illustrated in the experience of Denise, Alice and Christine. Their experience of achieving equality in their careers reinforces the democratic notion that equal opportunity is available to those who are serious about their own work. However, Denise and Alice assume that because they have achieved success through their own effort, the ideal of social equality was at work, and further that everyone who desired to could achieve equally - that opportunity exists for all. Christine assumes that in her chosen career equal opportunity exists totally because that is all she has experienced thus far. The fact of Christine and Joan having worked at the same career for different lengths of time allows us to see how the equal opportunity ideal breaks down in reality. Christine, newly involved in selling real estate, is thrilled with her experience of working primarily with successful women, having positive role models and having an equal chance to be successful on the basis of her individual effort. About this experience she states, "And it's great! It's equal!" Joan has come to understand that equality only goes so far - that whereas women can be successful in residential real estate, they are restricted in commercial real estate. She explains:

> Like I sell mainly residential real estate and with that there's no difference if you're a man or woman. ... But I find in commercial real estate it's very hard to have men believe you. ... I want to get into commercial real estate but it's really hard to have someone believe you can spend $3,000,000 and do it succesfully. I find that any of the big deals tend to go to the men. I think they feel more comfortable with them or something.

Thus, although the initial experience of working in the real estate business may be that one has equal opportunity in a democratic sense, in actuality a hierarchy is in existence, operating on the patriarchal ideal that the most prestigious and powerful positions go to men. Thus, like the old adage, "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing," it may also be true that drawing conclusions about social equality on the basis of a little experience is also dangerous.

3. Feminist Ideology:

In response to the question, "What do you think of the Women's Movement?," and in answer to other questions as well, the 13 women discussed their interpretations of feminist ideology. Eleven of the women believe that the Women's Movement supports women's achieving equality and that it had generally influenced society and/or themselves in a positive way. One woman, Madelaine, mostly experiences conflict in relation to feminist ideals; and one woman, Alice, is largely confused about feminist ideals, regards the Women's Movement as an embarassment and perceives women who are actively involved in the Movement as simply on a bandwagon.

With regard to the 11 women who believed the Women's Movement to have had a positive effect on their lives and the lives of other women, eight of these women (Elizabeth, Joan, Jean, Theresa, Denise, Christine, Marcela, and Mary) valued the Women's Movement for raising women's consciousness (themselves included) in various ways. Elizabeth explains how the Women's Movement has changed her ideas about women's position in society, their right to opportunities which provide for growth and self-esteem, and their right to freedom from oppression. She states:

> But you know, when you talk about the Women's Movement, I think that the most exciting thing about it for me is getting to and understanding significant feelings I haven't faced before. Meanings that I never recognized. The whole thing of oppression of women – it took me a long time to recognize that. I just took it for granted that, 'That's the way life is.' I never said, 'That's wrong! It is diminishing. It is preventing growth. It is preventing self-esteem. It's preventing freedom. It's

> preventing everything.' I just took it for granted, 'That's real. That's life. That's reality.'

Similarily, Joan perceives that the Women's Movement has made women more aware that they deserve to be treated equally, and that it has opened up more opportunities for women. She states:

> I think liberation has made women more aware of what we didn't have before – that we didn't have equal pay and that we didn't have equal rights. And I think it's made us think more along those lines, that dammit, we should be getting it. ... I think we should have equal opportunity too. Like I'm glad to see women getting into West Point. Not that I would ever want to do it, but if you want to do it, fine, do it.

The Women's Movement made Christine aware that there were more options for women than she had learned to believe was possible as a child. This new awareness made her unhappiness with her life–style legitimate and at the same time made her excited about other possibilities. She explains:

> It's like I never even started thinking that much until about 10 years ago when the Women's Movement started here in Edmonton. And it pointed out that women were doing all kinds of different things, that I never even thought of, that women could do. And it really stimulated me. Then I started to be very unhappy.

As with Christine, the Women's Movement also made Denise aware that her needs were important. She understands now that women who lose touch with their own needs because they put everyone else's needs first lose their identity.

> The Women's Movement has affected me in the sense that I have taken a broader look at myself – that my needs are important – whereas I just used to forget about what I needed. ... It has affected me in the sense that I speak out now and give my opinion and say, 'I need this or need that', and that's necessary for me to function and develop and not become, you know, a lost soul. ... You can lose your identity.

In addition, Denise discussed the Women's Movement in relation to women now having the opportunity to realize their potential and gaining equality in the public world of business, politics and paid work, and in marriage too. She states:

> I think it's very, very good. I think it's excellent. ... I think it's just super myself, in the sense that they are people. And they can hold responsible positions. They can make decisions. And really, some of them have wonderful minds that have never been given a chance to be expressed. It's just terrific! Really terrific! ... We're looking for equality in salary. And it goes right down to if you want to drive a truck, you drive a truck. ... I think that they've come a long ways, and I think it's a good thing. I don't think that any woman should take abuse from anyone, even in a marriage.

Ideology from the Women's Movement raised Marcela's consciousness about the possibilities for her personal life in two respects: career choice and

relationships with women. Feminist ideology taught her that she could pursue an academic career through graduate school, instead of the "feminine" career of fashion and design which she found unsatisfying. Once she took the first step, she learned from experience that she need not experience academic success vicariously through her husband – she could be successful in her own right. As regards women, she learned it was possible to have intimate, deep and trusting friendships with women instead of feeling in competition with them for men. Elizabeth, too, has been encouraged by feminist ideology to value, understand, and feel close to women. She explains:

> Being a woman today also means I think, and this is very important to me, that I can be closer to people I value. And those are women. And that I can understand what they are talking about better than men can. Because what they are talking about means more to me.

Mary also identified a change in her relationships with women from competitive and superficial to serious and supportive as a result of the Woman's Movement. Rather than being "on the meat market – out on the hustle, when it seemed so important to get a man," she now feels noncompetitive around women and not threatened by their beauty, personality or money, the way she used to be. (She did admit, however, to being threatened by publically successful women, as did Joan.) Further, Mary discovered that feminist literature (her introduction to it being Greer's *The Female Eunuch*) described her experience in her marriage accurately, giving her the words with which to understand what was happening to her and which she sees now as "one of the contributing factors to the demise of our shaky marriage." Her reaction to the feminist literature she read was, "This is it! This is the gospel truth." Thus, as with Christine and Denise, feminist ideology made Mary's feelings of dissatisfaction appear legitimate to her and ultimately led to a change in her expectations for herself.

Jean feels that feminist ideology has addressed her experience as a single woman, given her the words with which to understand what has happened to her, legitimized her perceptions and made her feel less isolated. She explains:

> The Women's Movement just kind of crystallized a whole bunch of stuff that had been going on in my mind all my life. So that from thinking that I was merely an outcast because I didn't fit any of the regular molds, I at least began to have, to feel that I had company. That there were lots of other outcasts that didn't fit the molds, and that it was going to be okay.... And the Women's Movement kind of gave me a hand, because it sort of legitimized it. Otherwise, if I'd been born a generation ago, I'd have had a real hard time.

That the Women's Movement has made a difference to how they felt about themselves was also the experience of Christine and Elizabeth. Christine speaks about her sense of belonging to a movement that works to benefit all women, of the strength she derives from this sense of belonging and of the mutual support she experiences within the Movement. Elizabeth explains that reading feminist literature gives her a sense of peace because it speaks the truth to her, quite the opposite to her daily experience at work where she has to fight and struggle to be understood.

In addition to talking about how the Women's Movement affected them personally, seven women talked about how society in general was being or could be affected by feminist ideology. Theresa equated the current-day Women's Movement to the Suffrage Movement, stating, "I think that there's going to be some good done from it. I think it will go down in history...." Denise too, referred to the Suffrage Movement as being the beginning of the Women's Movement of today, which she identified as the American movement working for the ERA. Heidi perceives that the Women's Movement is responsible for changes which have improved women's position in society today, and that this change is reflected in the law. She explains:

> I think it's great! If we would have stayed like 100 years ago, then we wouldn't be as good off as we are today. I think that it was time that women stood up for themselves and spoke up and I admire everybody that does so. ...I think it was time that the women got a say in their lives. Yeah. It was really good that the Property Act came when it came. I think it should have been done long ago.

Whereas some women focused on the historical aspects of the Women's Movement, others focused on its potential to change the future of society. Jean spoke of how she supports the Women's Movement because she thinks it's "freeing a generation of children" who are aware they have more choices than did the last generation. Marcela and Elizabeth, too, referred to the Women's Movement as a vehicle for social change. Joan stressed that changes in society

reflecting feminist ideology will give men, as well as women, greater choice. In her words:

> I believe that when women are liberated, men are liberated too. Like I feel sorry for some of the men nowadays. They have to go out and provide, and generally, once they're in a job, they have to stay there because they can't afford to quit. ... Whereas, I think with Women's Lib, if women were free to pursue careers that they wanted to and make the money that they could, men would be freer to be able to stay home if they wanted to. Because there's a lot of men that would be happier than hell staying home, raising the family and the wives go out to work. But it's an unaccepted thing right now.

In spite of the overwhelming support for the Women's Movement and feminist ideology by 11 of the 13 women interviewed, some of these women had concerns about particular aspects of the Movement itself, it limitations and consequences. Denise voiced a concern about the tactics used by some women which she believes have hurt the Movement generally, "like burn the bra," an action she considers to have been "just a timewaster." Interestingly, Denise's interpretation of women burning their bras was that it was an attempt on their part to be just like men: "Men don't wear bras, so women were burning their bras." Even so, Denise understands that the radical element of the Women's Movement has a purpose. She explains her position:

> I think it's very, very good. I think it's excellent! Even though some of them are going a little – not like even you or I would consider necessary. You know, some of it's a little radical maybe, or something. But the person who is the radical is going to change something. Something they say or do will be retained, and put into another perspective or usefulness.

The idea of burning bras did not make sense to Joan either, who perceives this action to be extreme. The radical aspect of the Movement concerns her as well and although she is not clear about what she finds unacceptable, like Denise she also sees the purpose of radical action. Joan states:

> I wouldn't burn my bra. And I think that at the beginning women got too carried away with it. But maybe we had to, to get it into the forefront – like burning the bras and Gloria Steinem and all this kind of stuff. I think that they sort of got into it too hot and heavy but they probably had to, to bring it into the forefront.

Whereas Denise does not see marching with signs as radical, and explains that she, herself, would do this, Theresa sees this as a radical action she would not liked to be involved in. She begins her discussion of radical feminists by disagreeing with their tactics. As she continues, however, she begins to

understand why women might behave radically and what might be the effect of radical action.

> I guess I disagree with some of the radical kinds of things they do. I'm not sure they're all necessary. When it comes to the point of bra burning and the whole, I think radical – oh what do you call that when they go out on the streets and they march or do any of that kind of stuff? I think there's probably other ways of fighting it. I think all that does is probably – well there's probably a little bit of a benefit to it because maybe it makes somebody stop and take notice. ... I think that just by having the publicity and having been heard, like people are stopping and listening, I think more, to the Women's Movement. I think it's almost like any strike, and I don't care if it's men or women or who. Like for some reason nobody stops to take notice unless somebody gets a little radical sometimes. ... I wouldn't like to be involved in it, but I'm not saying it's all wrong or all foolish. Like I can see some merit to it. ... Like if you try and everything else fails, you might as well try something radical.

Jean describes the radical element of the movement as "necessary to get it started" and as stimulating people like herself, who tend not to be politically active, to think about issues. She explains:

> I personally would never have chosen to have done or said a lot of things that people did or said. But in the overview of the movement itself, they were necessary because they got it going. And they caused people like me, who just accepted all kinds of stuff all their lives, to think about things. I mean to think about semantics, to think about things they'd always taken for granted because everybody else took them for granted. And that's important.

Beret has difficulty with what she terms "extremists" in the Women's Movement whom she believes to reject men and make the Movement look bad – "put the rest of them in a bad light." She has the impression that some feminists think "all the jobs could be manned by women pretty well, and we really could get along pretty well just without the men," an attitude she does not respect. The anti–male element bothers Marcela as well. Her concern arises not from impressions gleaned in the media but from first–hand experience.

> A lot of the stuff that bothers me the most has to do with the way they talk to, treat and speak about men in their own lives. Which invalidates their commitment in my mind. And so I think I still have a certain reserve with certain kinds of feminists, although I encourage it totally, even in its worst moments.

Another concern, voiced by Denise, is that women may, in their hurry to gain new rights for themselves, forget about the needs of children. Although she herself as a widow and single parent was required to work out of the home, and although she understands the need for women to have separate identities, she still

believes that mothers staying home with their children is ideal. Denise's conflict appears to be between the patriarchal ideology she has internalized, her own reality and the feminist ideology she is still trying to come to terms with. For Mary, the conflict between career and responsibility is her reality, and represents the struggle between patriarchal and feminist ideology. She explains her conflict:

> I think I'm trying to find somewhat of a happy medium for myself within it, trying to balance the fact that I do have an urge to get out and do something, with the feeling that I must look after the home fires too. But at least, maybe because of the Feminist Movement, I'm even asking that, whereas maybe 10 years ago I wouldn't even have asked that. I would have just assumed that I had to do that and I wouldn't be struggling to find an answer.

Confusion about feminist ideology, stemming from inaccurate media interpretation, from social and political backlash or from the nature of the ideology itself (i.e., that it is new and developing and incomplete) is evidenced in the discussions of several women. As was mentioned above, Denise had interpreted bra burning as the action of women who wanted to be like men rather than as women protesting society's perception of them as sex objects. Her dismissal of this political action seems to reflect her discomfort with the notion that women must be like men to be equal. Concern that women are not valued as women, i.e., in their difference from men, or that being equal might mean being like men is the basis of Sally's and Madelaine's concern with the Women's Movement as well. Sally's concern centers around the fact of women's uniqueness as bearers of children and the necessity of understanding that this fact should not be overlooked, nor should it be used to determine what else women can or can't do. Madelaine experienced conflict more than anything else in relation to feminist ideology. She wonders if gaining equality might backfire on women in that they will be forced to participate equally in male activities such as fighting in wars. Madelaine's conflict with feminist ideology is more personal than this, however. While applauding individual freedom and rights for women and the social changes she has witnessed over her lifetime, she feels a compromise must be made with men – that they need to have a special place, feel important, be head of the household and be encouraged to accept this responsibility. It appears that to live peacefully in her own marriage, it is necessary for Madelaine to believe that feminist ideology must

take second place to patriarchal ideology – that women can be free and independent only if this does not threaten men. Madelaine's conflict with feminist ideology appears to reflect the conflict she experiences in her own marriage.

Alice, who dismisses the Women's Movement almost entirely, demonstrates a great misunderstanding of feminist ideology. She strongly objects to women being patronized and attributes this attitude to feminist rather than patriarchal ideology. Consider the following statement:

> I wouldn't say that I don't respect the Women's Movement as such, but I think that what I don't respect is a lot of women going into a movement like that and pointing out women who have done so well, *for a woman*.

Alice's assumption that women are in the Women's Movement "just to be in a movement" and that only a woman with position (she gives the example of a 74 year old woman who is a member of the U.S. Congress) could understand inequality and thereby gain her respect, reflects patriarchal ideology. Women, unless they have achieved public status, are not respected. Further, Alice's own adoption of indirect, manipulative, "feminine wiles" to influence others and her discomfort with direct action explains her embarassment with active feminists, an attitude evidenced in the following:

> I'm just thinking in terms of the more vocal things that I heard in the early days, you know, in the ban-the-bra days and so on. There were so many people who were very vocal and saying a lot. And I couldn't hold any respect for them.... And lots of times I get the feeling like I, or I did get the feeling, although I haven't really thought about it much lately, 'Why don't they just shut up! Because we women are losing respect.' You know. There's no control over what can be said and what can be quoted. And I'm not saying specifically that I have no respect, I'm just, I don't know.

Women who are actively involved in the Women's Movement have concerns which arise from their experience. Marcela is upset by the divisions within the Movement based on ideological conflict, and the tendency of some feminists to be "unnecessarily critical of women's personal lives." She judges this behavior to be "in lots of ways bankrupt and decrepit and stultifying to the Movement." Further, she explains the consequences to herself thus: "I am personally hurt by that and often impeded in my own actions." For Elizabeth, one of the conflicts she experiences in her involvement with the Women's Movement is internal: how much time and energy can she give to feminist action without

destroying her health in the process? Another conflict is theortical: how much can the Women's Movement force change on a society which is threatened by this change, is actively resisting it and fighting back? A third conflict concerns the social and political backlash women are experiencing as a result of their attempts to achieve equality. Elizabeth is concerned that violence against women is increasing as part of this backlash. (Theresa, who is not actively involved in the Women's Movement except on an individual basis, similarly perceives and is upset by men's disrespect for and sexual harassment of women. She believes this to be the result of men being threatened by women's new status and consequently more hostile to individual women.) Elizabeth's and Marcela's concerns do not detract from their belief in feminist ideology, however. Elizabeth concludes:

> But I have no reservations about what the Women's Movement is doing.... So I'm going to stay with it. I will promote it and support it and participate as much as I can.

The change that must take place in women's lives and in society in order that feminist ideology become manifest in reality, and the action necessary for such change to occur was discussed by nine of the participants. Denise advises all women to first respect themselves and take themselves seriously. Sally speaks of women living their lives on the assumption that they are equal to men, and acting in groups to insure their rights. She states:

> I think every woman should do what she believes in, what she thinks is right for herself. To me it's that women have to go out and do what's best for them. That's what I think people should do. Just because something's best for some doesn't mean it's best for everyone. It's up to the woman. Women's liberation means to me women are people just like men and should be treated as equals. Men are no better. That's the way I look at it. Like if a group of ladies are trying to stand up for women's rights, I don't see anything wrong with that, because I mean, after all, I guess women are usually put down more than men are. And that's bad, cause women are people too.

Theresa maintains that more women have to learn to assert themselves because they have been conditioned to think of themselves as subordinate to men. In her words:

> I think that women have to assert themselves, a whole lot better. They're probably not strong enough because of background and because of the way they've been brought up that probably the man is right, or he thinks better or he thinks more logically or whatever. I think we've been conditioned to that kind of thing.

Elizabeth is concerned that men's not caring about women's oppression is making

change difficult. She sees the necessity for "more and more women (to) start valuing themselves" as a precursor for change. Whereas Denise, Sally, Theresa and Elizabeth speak to the issue of personal change that individual women must undergo in order to assert themselves and effect social change, eight women spoke of specific social changes they perceive as necessary for women, based on their own experience. Theresa sees a need for changes in the way the medical profession perceives and treats women with gynecological problems. She would like to see a counselling service available to women (and their families), prior to and after they undergo hysterectomies. In conjunction with this, she sees a need for doctors to be better educated regarding women's health and treatment. Elizabeth sees a need for change in psychiatrists attitudes toward and treatment of women, and in the policies of the Catholic church which affect women. Heidi sees a need for more changes in the laws affecting women. Mary believes that until quality daycare is available to all children, women will be required to limit their choice of work and commitment to a career. Joan sees a need for the removal of barriers which continue to prevent women from equal participation in society. Sally and Theresa are aware that attitudes toward women need to be changed. Jean believes that changing sexist language in written materials, both for schools and the general public and, in addition, changing our spoken language, is necessary in order to change people's attitudes. Marcela speaks to the issue of political change, of "building political actions which ... involve and mobilize women in groups." She sees as a necessity, given that our society is patriarchal, the creation of small communities which are supportive and respectful of women. At the same time she sees the need to integrate feminist ideology and political action with other movements. In her own life, she is attempting to integrate feminism and socialism. She explains:

> Women should create a new world. Not they *should*. If you have any commitment to a version of social transformation, then you of course decide the route which you will take. And if you're a feminist and a socialist, you of course have certain solutions which are not the norm. ... Realistically speaking, the only place in which I think women and men can create a new world that is not dominated by men is in small groups. In small communities. And if you have a political commitment, you create a political community which has an ideology which favors that world view.

F. Summary

A critical analysis of the 13 case studies resulted in four broad categories, under which is outlined the dimensions of the women's lives which both affect and are affected by the meaning women give to their experience as women.

Individual Factors

Health

Nine of the 13 participants described how their own state of health affected their lives. Two of these women valued their good health because they were aging, two women were aware of how a current illness affected their general outlook, and six women described past and present problems involving female physiology and menstruation.

Physical Appearance

Physical appearance was an issue affecting perception and acceptance of self for six of the 13 participants. For three women being big or fat led to feelings of inadequacy and had a major negative effect on their self-concept. Two women experienced their appearance as unacceptable but considered this a minor problem. One of the women felt comfortable with her body and judged this feeling to be an asset.

Temperament

Six of the 13 participants described themselves as having "always been" of a particular nature which has affected how they experience their lives. Two women perceived themselves as having "timid, shy and withdrawn personalities;" two women perceived themselves as having always been "tomboys;" one woman described herself as having a "rebellious nature;" and one woman described herself as possibly having "schizophrenic tendencies."

Family Relationships

Relationships to Mothers

Nine of the 13 participants experienced both positive and negative or conflicting relationships with their mothers. Two women described their relationships as positive and two as negative.

Relationships to Fathers

Four of the 13 participants experienced their relationships with their fathers as having been strongly positive, two as intensely conflicted and two as negative. Two women spoke of their relationship to their father as having had much less impact than that to their mothers and two perceived their relationships as having had little or no impact. (One of the latter was a step-father).

Family Dynamics, Birth Order, Size and Composition

The nature of their parents relationships was described by 12 of 13 participants as having had a significant impact on their lives, the effect being positive or negative. Being an eldest daughter in a large family was a significant and negative factor for two woman and being a middle daughter in a large family was a significant and negative factor for three women. Being the eldest of three daughters on a farm was significant in a positive sense for one woman and being the only daughter of five children on a farm was significant in a negative sense for one woman.

Relationships to Relatives Other Than Mother or Father

Although all of the participants spoke of the effect on them of particular relatives, only six perceived their relationships with family members other than parents to have had a significant impact. Grandmothers and aunts were described as having had the greatest impact, although one woman spoke of both grandparents, one of her aunt and uncle and one of her extended family generally. Further, one woman spoke of an older female cousin as having been of great importance to her. Relationships with siblings were considered less important.

Social Factors

Family's Status in the Community

Nine participants experienced that the social and/or financial status or origin had a significant impact on their lives. Specifically, two women benefited from and two were hindered by their family's social status, and two women benefited from and five were hindered by their family's financial status.

Friends

Childhood friends (or all ages and both sexes) were a positive factor in the lives of five of the 13 participants and not belonging to a peer group was a negative factor for four women. Current friendships (primarily with women) were considered an important and positive factor in their lives by 12 women.

Professionals and Institutional Policies

Six of the 13 participants perceived certain teachers to have had a significant impact on their lives; six women reported that they were affected by doctors; four by therapists; four by nuns, priests and Catholic Church doctrine; one woman by lawyers; two by people they worked with and two by the policies of institutions. Policies were perceived as having had a negative effect and professionals as having had both positive and negative.

Social Norms and Generational Cohort

Ten of the 13 participants discussed how social norms and expectations of "the times" regarding education, work and marriage, affected them. Eight women discussed how social norms and expectations regarding childcare and maternal love had an impact on their lives.

Cultural/Political Factors

Geophysical Setting and Population Density

Living in a rural environment with low population density was a significant factor in the childhood of six women and in adulthood for four women.

Cultural Differences

Being a member of an ethnic group or culture with minority status has been a significant factor in the lives of three of the 13 participants. Being an immigrant has had a major effect in one woman's life and a minor effect in two women's lives.

Political/Economic Forces

The Depression of the 1930s affected one woman's life significantly and another woman's life hardly at all. World War II affected two women directly and two women indirectly. The Vietnam War had a profound, direct effect on one woman. Finally, the current threat of nuclear disaster was having an significant

effect on three women.

Social/Political Ideology

Three distinct ideologies (patriarchal, democratic and feminist) were either discussed directly or referred to indirectly by the participants. With regard to patriarchal ideology, nine women discussed the "fact" of male public power and/or the negative consequences for women. Four women rejected the idea that women are less valued than men. As to the progress that women have made under patriarchy, three women focused on what women have achieved and two women focused on the lack of real change and the difficulty of making changes. Ten women alluded to democratic ideology in relation to their perception of social equality in education and career opportunity or recognized that social equality was limited. As regards feminist ideology, 11 of the 13 participants support the idea of equality for women and feel they have personally benefited from these ideals. One woman experienced primarily conflict with regard to feminist ideals and one woman was largely negative toward and confused about the meaning of feminism.

VIII. Discussion

A. The Case Studies

The case studies are important, in and of themselves, because they demonstrate that there is a meaningful structure to the lives of the participants, which they alone can provide. The phenomenological method allows for this structure to emerge. Although the researcher directs the interview insofar as the theme is determined by the interview questions, the questions are open-ended and the content (meanings, experiences, connections) are provided by the women whose experience is being investigated. Open-ended questions also serve the purpose of providing for a check on internal validity. In other words, that any particular experience is truly important or meaningful is validated by the participant's answer to the various interview questions. For example, we know that Beret's experience of being physically big was truly distressing to her because she talks about it in relation to four different questions: ("What has it meant to you to be a woman?," "What do you regret or resent in your life?," "What do you dislike about yourself?," and "What do you value in yourself?"). Similarly, that Jean's fear of being rejected is central to her life, is validated in that she speaks about her fear in answer to several questions: ("What has it meant to you to be a woman?," "In what ways have you experienced yourself as powerless?," "What do you dislike about yourself?," "What do you regret or resent in your life?," "What do you value about yourself?" and "In what ways have you experienced yourself as powerful?") and in relation to many experiences (at school, at work and in relation to friends, relatives, co-workers, acquaintences).

The phenomenological method of research was particularly suited to this study because its focus is on the study of meaning, in this case the particular meaning that women give to being a woman. In the phenomenological tradition, any attempt by the researcher to impose a pre-conceived structure or interpretation on the woman's experiences must be recognized as possibly distorting it (van Kaam, 1966). Thus, it is essential for the researcher to not assume a particular interpretation of a woman's experience, but rather to ask for the woman's own interpretation. To this end the interview focused on what the women's experiences meant to *them* – how they felt

about them and how they made sense of them. The result is that we understand not just what it means and has meant to these women to be women, but we understand why this is so. Given who they are and what they have lived through, their present lives and the meanings they attribute to being a woman make sense. We become aware of a structure to their lives which they have created from the meanings they give to their experience. We understand from *inside* that structure – from each woman's point of view – why they feel, think and behave the way they do. For example, we understand why Heidi stayed for so long with her abusive husband, why Sally considered giving up her child for adoption, why Elizabeth attempted suicide, why Christine left her marriage, why Jean is afraid of being rejected and why Alice doesn't like to be associated with the Women's Movement. Further, we understand why Joan's first association to being a woman is that it's unfair, why Christine, Elizabeth, Sally and Heidi perceive their lives as women to have been a struggle, why Beret and Denise enjoy and feel satisfied being women, why Theresa enjoys and finds it challenging to be a woman, why Madelaine feels confused, why Mary feels frustrated, why Marcela feels anxious, why Jean feels inadequate and why Alice thinks of herself as a person first, not as a woman. This level of understanding is essential for professionals working with women (especially psychologists, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses and social workers). That therapists generally have not had this understanding is widely documented in feminist literature (Al–Issa, 1980; Chesler, 1972; Ehrenreich & English, 1978; Miller, 1976; Smith & David, 1975).

Another advantage to using the phenomenological method of research is that it allows us to explore the particular meanings women give to their experience which on the surface may appear similar but upon closer examination are very different. For example, Joan and Denise both speak of valuing "security" in their lives. Joan values the security she feels from the money she makes at her job and which she painstakingly saves in her bank account, as a safeguard against the insecurity of poverty she experienced as a child. Denise, on the other hand, values the security of having a warm, comfortable home with a caring family (husband, children, grandchildren), something which she experienced as a child and has maintained in various forms and circumstances throughout her life. "Power" also meant different things to the participants. Two

women (Denise and Alice) primarily associated power with manipulation and destruction – something "awful," "not nice." Eight women (Elizabeth, Christine, Jean, Heidi, Sally, Beret, Madelaine, and Joan) perceived power as a positive force arising from their personal determination, competencies and ability to control their own lives and/or from their social position and status. Three women (Theresa, Mary, and Marcela) spoke of power as having both a positive and negative side, as having the potential for harm or good. How the women themselves experienced power also differed. Whereas 10 of the 13 women perceived themselves as having personal power (i.e., having control over their own lives), only three perceived themselves as having social or interpersonal power (i.e., able to affect the lives of others). In fact, seven women (Joan, Beret, Madelaine, Jean, Theresa, Marcela, and Denise) stated that they did not feel powerful or did not wish to feel powerful in the sense of having power *over* others. These results support the findings of Lips (1981) that women are more likely to experience power in a personal sense than in an interpersonal sense. Further, these results refute the stereotype of women as being powerful only in the sense that they can manipulate others. Again, the importance of exploring the particular meanings women give to the words they use is demonstrated.

Lerner (1976a) and Mitchell (1977) have advised researchers to study the lives of women in their complexity. That a phenomenological study of women's lives can result in an understanding of women's experience in its complexity is attested to by the women's answers to the questions, "In what ways have you experienced yourself as powerful?" and "In what ways have you experienced yourself as powerless?" Results showed that all of the 13 participants had experienced themselves as both powerful and powerless. Further, the interviews clearly demonstrated that the women's feelings of being powerful or powerless relate to a specific aspect of themselves or to a specific event or situation. For example, Joan generally feels powerful in her career in real–estate in so far as she has gained status, financial security, and recognition from others, and has knowledge that buyers seek from her. At the same time she felt powerless in the face of her son's accident and consequent injuries. Beret feels powerful in the sense of having determination, drive and the willpower to surmount obstacles. She doesn't feel powerless, except when she is confronted with criticism

and can't defend herself. Theresa feels powerful because she is not afraid to fight for what she wants but feels powerless because she lacks a formal education and lives in a small Northern community where opportunities for continuing education are limited.

These results present a challenge to those personality theorists who categorize human behaviors into diametrically opposite and mutually exclusive traits. Believing that any particular trait *belongs to* the person, they do not examine the context of behavior. It was in keeping with this orientation that Erikson defined men as outer-directed and active, and women as inner-directed and passive. It is on this basis, too, that tests of masculinity/femininity place at opposite ends of the scale mutually exclusive personality traits such as aggressive and submissive, strong and weak, intellectual and emotional. It has been simply assumed that if one is intellectual, she or he can not also be emotional; if one is submissive, she or he can not also be aggressive; and if one is powerful, she or he can not also be powerless. Further, a woman who was thought to be submissive was believed to *own* this trait. It was not understood that she was *acting* submissively *within a particular context*. Sherif (1979a) suggests that this simplistic portrayal of human behaviour has gone unchallenged due to the current predominance of behaviorism in psychology. Behaviorism, she explains, insists that it is unscientific to study the human social environment except in terms of rewards and punishments. Jay (1981) demonstrates the inadequacy of perceiving women and men in dualistic terms using formal logic. Assuming women to be the opposite of men, or powerless to be the opposite of powerful, is as false as assuming A to be the opposite of B, according to Jay's way of thinking. All we really can say, she explains, is that not A is the opposite of A. In other words, the use of formal logic makes clear the fault in assuming that women are a psychological Other because they are not a social Subject. That the case studies demonstrate the complexity of women's lives also presents a challenge to deBeauvoir's thesis of women as psychological Other. Women's answers to the questions about being powerful and powerless directly contradict the idea that because women have little or no formal power in patriarchal society (their status is Other) they experience themselves simply as powerless (as Other). It is true that the women did experience themselves as powerless in specific situations and that they tended to feel powerful more in a personal sense than in a social sense. However, the research demonstrates

that the large majority felt personally powerful despite their awareness of having little or no public power. In fact, over half of the participants (8/13) experienced themselves as more powerful than powerless. The psychological experience of these women was obviously more than a reflection of their social status. Thus, deBeauvoir's concept of the female psyche is demonstrated to be simplistic.

The complexity of their lives became apparent to some of the women during the interview. Theresa stated: "I guess like all things, being a woman is probably a pretty complicated thing." Being a woman is a complicated experience for each woman because her various experiences as a woman have different meanings to her. The understanding that being a woman can mean many different things to any one woman is a major point arising from the interviews. This phenomenon will be discussed in detail in the section to follow. Being a woman is also complex in the sense that any one experience will have different meanings for different women because they are different people – they have different temperaments, different physiologies and different pasts and presents, having lived in different places at different times with different families under different circumstances. Thus, another major point arising from the interviews is that women are different, and there is no one tidy formula to account for why they attribute particular meaning to their experience as women. deBeauvoir's use of "woman" (as discussed in Chapter I) is thus demonstrated to be misleading. There is no single model of the female psyche. There are, however, meanings in common – meanings shared with other women. The meanings may be attributed to similar experiences but just as likely may be attributed to very different experiences. For example, both Denise and Christine value being mothers and appreciate their children. Denise came from a loving, caring home and felt valued by her parents (especially her father); Christine was abused in her home and only much later, after she left her marriage, came to appreciate herself and her children.

That the phenomenological method is subjective, i.e., relies on the perception and memory of the individual, is not seen to be a problem. Rather it is a strength, since it is the meaning of her life to the individual woman that is being investigated. It is evident from the case studies that the women interviewed, given the opportunity to speak for themselves, were able to articulate what it has meant to them to be women. In many

cases the women had not reflected previously on the interview questions. Alice, for example, in response to the question, "What has it meant to you to be a woman?" begins by stating: "Well that's a big question. I don't think I'd really thought about it until you mentioned it today." Similarly, Joan states: "Well I don't know. I've never really thought about being a woman." And yet, given time to think and discuss in an atmosphere of trust, all of the participants were able to speak to the question in relation to the past as well as the present, making connections to events and circumstances in their lives which they experienced as meaningful and important. The fact that this happened lends support to the notion (referred to in Chapters II and IV) that in a phenomenological study validity is in part determined by the interviewer's ability to create a safe and trusting environment and to encourage the participants to reflect on their experiences and what they mean to them.

It is believed that the creation of an atmosphere of trust was central to the women being able to speak as freely as they did. Interviewing each woman in a setting that she found comfortable was one key to establishing trust. Another was to preface the interview with a clear statement as to the purpose of the interview and the interviewer's belief that what women had to say about their lives was important and could be useful to others. The women's responses to questions about the interview itself verifies this. Alice comments on her openness with the interviewer, even though they were strangers, explaining her perceptions of the interviewer as genuinely interested in what she had to say.

> I didn't feel it difficult to talk to you because you were a stranger. No! Not at all! I hedge around a little bit when it comes to things that are personal and that start to hurt, but I was open enough to shed a tear or two, so it must have not been a very big barrier. I am not suspicious in any way of your motives or your own feelings, probably because I don't feel that I have to fit into any mold. I don't feel you looking for anything specific. I feel you as a pretty objective observer, no matter what your own personal views might be, in terms of people, in terms of women, in terms of movements, or health food or anything, you know.

Mary similarly experienced the interviewer as not expecting her to be other than who she is.

> I didn't feel that I had to play it a certain way for you, that I could, you know, just be myself; that I wouldn't have to try to come off in any way to impress you.

That the personality and behavior of the interviewer are important in determining how

comfortable the women were to talk about themselves was also discussed by some of the women. Mary described how she might have felt inhibited with another interviewer.

> I was amazed at how freely I always did speak to counselling people when I was talking about myself. But a lot had to do with your personality too. I think if you were someone like Leslie I wouldn't be able to talk as easily. She strikes me – I mean she's really great, I'm not putting her down, but to me she's out there, highly successful. I guess it's just her personality is very strong. She makes me feel like not opening my mouth because obviously, what am I going to say to someone like her? I find the personality of the other person would be important.

Joan, too, described how the interviewer's personality affected her ability to speak openly about herself. She explains how previous contact with the interviewer had already established for her a sense of comfort about doing the interview.

> I've always felt comfortable with you, like in that class, and I've always felt that I could talk to you. Someone else, I don't know if I would have felt as comfortable. Like I've never had the situation happen but I don't think I would have felt as comfortable. But I've always liked you and I've always felt comfortable with you and that I could say things to you. Like I say, I don't know. It would depend how the other person and I hit it off to begin with. Because with some people I am very open and other people I won't be quite as open. But I've always been very open with you. Like you've got – I don't know what it is, your personality or whatever – you give me the feeling that I can talk to you.

Madelaine, who was so nervous at the beginning of the interview that she requested the interviewer turn off the tape recorder so she could calm herself, discussed how the interviewer being friendly and caring helped her to relax and to trust that she could speak openly.

> At first I was a little shy, I think because I knew I'd be talking about personal things. And then I said, 'Well, what the heck! I have nothing to hide about how I feel, or my feelings on this.' But it's made it easier because of your friendliness and you sort of broke that barrier I think. I don't know if I would have done it otherwise. You know, that, I think, helped me. I trusted you, for sure. I got the feeling that you cared and everything was going to be alright.

Perhaps Elizabeth's description of the interviewer as non-judgmental and therefore not a threat to her self-esteem is central to the establishment of trust in and comfort with the interviewer. Elizabeth stated:

> Most people judge. You constantly feel that what you are saying about yourself is going to be judged. And I know you well enough to know that you don't do that. That's not typical of people, you know. There's no way that I felt that my self-esteem, for example, has been affected by this interview. Whereas if I felt I was being judged, I would be setting myself up for a blow to my self-esteem. And probably, as a result, not be able to talk very freely, about my inadequacies, or lack of firm conclusions about a lot of things.

Answers to the question, "Would it have made any difference to you if you had been interviewed by a man?" demonstrate that the gender of the interviewer is an issue for more than half of the women interviewed. Seven of the thirteen women interviewed stated that the interviewer being female was an important issue to them, four stated that it was not, and two qualified their answers. The reasons given by the seven women for preferring a female interviewer were as follows:

1. Four women would have felt uncomfortable speaking to a male interviewer about particular topics.

   Beret states:
   Yes, if you'd have been a man I don't think I would have felt as free to say maybe some of the things. Then I don't think I would have been as comfortable. I would have thought maybe twice about some things that we might have talked about – some things that I thought maybe they wouldn't be interested in because I don't think it would have meant anything much to them. And I would be really embarrassed about crying because I just am that emotional and that's just me. I would really have been embarrassed.

   Theresa states:
   The part of where we talked about my medical history. I guess I would have hesitated about being as open about it as I was with you, not because I would be afraid to say it to a man but I guess I wouldn't feel as comfortable. And if you don't feel comfortable there's some things you don't say.

   Marcela states:
   I wouldn't have talked about power as easily as I did. I wouldn't have talked about it. When the interview began, I was trying to let as many thoughts go through my mind as I could without restricting them, and I wouldn't have done that if you were a man. I would have felt obligated to be much more disciplined, rational.

   Sally states:
   Like I know I wouldn't feel too comfortable sitting and having an interview with a guy. I probably wouldn't say all the things I've said to you. No, I wouldn't.

2. Two women would have been afraid of being judged by a male interviewer, would be afraid a man could not understand them and/or would have questioned his motivations.

   Sally states:
   If you were a guy interviewing me, for sure I'd probably be nervous and wouldn't know what to say. Because of a man looking at me I'd be thinking that he'd be thinking, 'Well, you're only a woman.' I think it probably would make a difference to me. I would feel that he'd make some, or think something in his head. Well, it's just the idea that he'd be thinking that I was a lady I guess. A lady's feelings are deeper than a man's. Like when a man and a lady break up, it's easier for a man to forget about it because, well, it will take a lady longer because she thinks differently and her feelings would be a deeper feeling than a guy's would. So therefore it could take her a longer time to forget the

situation. Whereas a guy, like it just wouldn't bother him.

Joan states:

> I couldn't tell a man. I don't know why. Maybe I would get the feeling that he was sort of putting me down or looking down on me. But I think, like with a woman I get the feeling that you may not have totally agreed with what I said, but you understand it, that you can understand how I might feel about it. Whereas a man, I don't think they'd understand at all. Because most women – at least I feel put down about certain things and I don't think a man would understand how I would feel put down. Because I don't think men feel put down about things I feel put down about. Like they would not understand how I feel put down about my husband putting me down. Whereas I think you – you may not agree with me, but you can understand it. And I think women can understand that sort of thing. Whereas I don't think a man could. And besides, I'd wonder why the hell he was writing this book anyway.

3. Two women described how previous negative experiences with male psychiatrists would have made them reticent to talk to a male interviewer.

> Mary states:
> I just don't think I would let a man get that close to me. Not somebody that I didn't know. The one time I was talked to by a male psychiatrist was at University, and he utterly devastated me. He was a hideous person; he was really hideous and maybe that's why I have this reticence. My one contact with a male in this kind of context was really bad! I just don't think I would have been as relaxed.

> Elizabeth states:
> Hmmm. For sure! I would immediately feel like I was being exploited. For sure! Immediately! And a lot of that I think goes back to my psychiatric involvement, mostly with male psychiatrists. Because I recognize now the degree of exploitation that I suffered from male psychiatrists. I feel like I would be setting myself up to be distorted into his little, whatever he needed to prove about me, kind of thing. I just won't put up with it. And I think too that there are exceptions – men that don't need to make a case about women. I'm not sure that I could relate to any of them, because I wouldn't give them the benefit of the doubt. The probability is that any male interviewing me would be exploiting me, from my experience, and I know that. So I wouldn't trust a male interviewer. No. Because I would expect that they would probably exploit me.

It is important to understand, too, why the four women who stated that being interviewed by a male would not have made any difference to them, felt the way they did. Heidi made clear prior to the interview that she had just finished telling her life story to a judge in front of a courtroom full of people. Telling one more person, male or female, would not affect her. Alice and Christine would have felt relaxed talking to a male interviewer whom they assumed would also be a psychologist and who would therefore understand them. Madelaine explained that she likes to think of men as friends and finds she can sometimes talk to men more easily than she can to women. Regarding

the two women who qualified their answers, Denise stated that she wouldn't change the content of her interview if the interviewer were male "whether it had been a bishop or whoever" because she is "quite confident in my way of thinking." She does explain, however, that she may have been "a little more forceful towards standing up for women" and "a little more on my guard" with a male interviewer. Jean stated, "It would depend on the man," explaining that the personality and skills of the interviewer were more important to her than gender.

The results of this brief investigation of participants' reactions to the gender of the interviewer supports Miller's (1976) thesis that male researchers may fail to elicit responses from female subjects. The results also lend support to the anthropological studies conducted by Shirley Ardener (1975b) and Okely (1975), indicating that women reveal different information to female investigators than they do to male investigators. Lofland's (1975) conclusion that male researchers will be limited in their access to woman's minds to the degree that they define each other as *other* and perceive themselves as psychologically segregated is supported by the explanations given by the seven women who stated they would not feel comfortable with a male interviewer because men wouldn't understand certain of their experiences or feelings.

Riegel (1978) is concerned that if psychologists use only an empirical research method to study human behavior, changes in behavior over time cannot be understood. Incorporating the notion of change into our understanding women's (and human) experience is important because in reality life is dynamic, not static; experience is a process, not a product. Use of the phenomenological method of research in this study enables us to understand that the women's experience of being a woman changes over time. For example, Joan explains that 10 years ago when she was working at home as a full-time mother of two small children, she was very unhappy and dissatisfied. Today, working full-time selling real estate, she feels free, independent and satisfied. Alice also experienced a significant change over time. In her late teens and twenties the decisions she made about going to university, teaching, travelling, etc. were never really important to her. She was always waiting for something to happen to her, (i.e., to fall in love and settle down with the right man). At age 31, she changed. She quit waiting and began to actively plan and pursue a goal (opening her own restaurant) which became central to her

life. Now that she has achieved her goal, she thinks her values may shift again, as she becomes more open to taking time away from her work for her personal life. She is not sure, however, whether this change will come in the near or distant future. Mary, too, talks about change – how in conjunction with leaving her husband, joining a women's book club and reading feminist books she came to value her friendships with women. Prior to that time when she was in college, she did not treat her women friends seriously she explains, because they were all on the "meat-market," competing for dates and focusing on the major task of "getting a man." Elizabeth talks about how gaining an understanding of the process of change is part of how she has changed. She has learned that being free of sterotypes – of trying to measure up to something fixed – enables her to see herself as "becoming" or "evolving." This sense of freedom is new to her, she explains, because she used to be concerned about fitting herself to a stereotyped ideal.

Perceiving life experiences as a dynamic process involving change presents the idea of research itself being part of a process which can have an affect on those being researched and have the potential of precipitating change. Critical theorists have challenged the empirical belief in the neutrality of scientific knowledge, explained that knowledge is power, and demanded that objects of research become true subjects by gaining access to knowledge (as has been discussed in Chapter II.) Feminists, too, have have taken the position that scientists have a responsibility to those being researched to share with them the benefits of the research process. It was in order to determine whether the participants experienced the interview as a benefit to themselves, that I concluded the interview with the question, "What are your feelings about this interview?" All of the 13 women answered positively. The reasons they gave were as follows:

1. Six women enjoyed the chance to talk about themselves, get their own thoughts in order, or to consider the particular research questions involved in the interview.

> Joan states:
> Well I probably thought about a few things that I never thought about before. I've enjoyed it. I was more worried about it than it's actually been. Because I've never really thought, like I said, about how I felt about being a woman. It's never entered my mind all that much. Like I don't concern myself with it. I'm too busy doing other things to do that. I hope you write a book because I would like to know sort of how I compare to other women. I guess I've never talked to other women about it. I've never thought about it.

Alice states:
I think it's just terrific, for me personally. As I said before, I just love the chance to think out loud. Because the more I talk to you and the more I think about these things – it seems like I always start off saying, 'I don't know,' and then the more I think about it the more I say. Things start going together a little bit better. So I'm gaining a lot from this in terms of getting some of my thoughts in order, or some of my thoughts straight.

Mary states:
Well, it's been really interesting. I haven't had a chance to really talk about myself for a long time and it feels good to say something. The fact that you should be interviewing me at this point in my life is difficult for me in some ways, in a lot of ways. And it's just good to have a chance to sort of organize myself and think about what I'm doing.

Christine states:
Well, it's always nice to talk about yourself. I feel pretty good.

Jean states:
Well, I was interested when you first asked when you called me. I was interested in it because I was interested in the question. And it's harder to ask yourself the questions than it is to have somebody else ask you the question. And I was hoping that having somebody else's questions would give me some new insights. And I really wanted a chance to work through this stuff in an extended situation. Even though a person works through this all the time with their friends, it's different. For one thing, your friends want to talk too. And for another thing, your friends tend to protect you. When you say things that are critical of yourself, they tend to deny them and stuff like that, and remind you of things that are less negative. I mean friends are great, but they have their limitations. And I don't know, I was sort of hopeful about it.

Marcela states:
Well I think it's a fine interview, but only because I know who you are. And I like talking about myself. It's not often you get to do it, so I enjoyed it.

2. Five women believed they learned something about themselves as a result of answering the interview questions.

Theresa states:
I think it's kind of interesting. I'm glad I agreed to it. I think I learned some things about myself that I probably never ever stopped to think about. I think there's a lot of things that I never ever stopped to think about, unless somebody really forces you against the wall and says, 'Hey, what do you think about that?'

Mary states:
And maybe there's some useful information that I should think about, coming out of it. I never really thought about the power thing. I never thought about it in those terms before – powerlessness.

Jean states:
I hoped that I would learn some things, and I'm always game to learn new stuff. And I think I did. I learned some things that kind of jibed with stuff that had been kind of coming up lately. And that gave me a new slant. A little more coherent. And I don't know in the end whether it'll change my life or whether I'll just go ahead and do whatever it was I was going to do. I tend to be fairly impulsive in the end. When it comes down to leaving, I just do it. I may think about it for a long time in advance, but in the end, I just choose. Because it's the only way you'll

ever do anything. But I might not. I mean I am now considering, and I wasn't considering the possibility of staying or coming back soon. And now I'm at least considering the possibility.

Denise states:
I've enjoyed it very much. Very, very much! It makes you think. It brings out new ideas, new thoughts, refreshes your mind. You come out with new thoughts and ideas.

Sally states:
I thought that it was a good interview but I felt like I haven't given you enough answers, that you're looking for. I think it's good and I think you are trying to show people's – women's views and women's feelings and that women are just as smart as men. And I have really enjoyed this interview with you because I think it has made me realize that I have to talk to my mother, and that guy.

3. Seven women felt pleased to be able to contribute something of their experience which might be useful to the research project or to others. (Two of these women and one of the five above who felt she had learned something about herself had some doubts about what they had to offer).

Alice states:
I found it really valuable. And I wouldn't be here if I didn't think it was important because I do also think that I have something to say. And I think that, I don't know anything about the other people that you've talked to, but I've got a pretty good idea that you are choosing at random yet selectively. You're looking for certain kinds of people to talk to. And so I feel good about that. When you first said, 'I'm going to ask you what it means to you to be a woman,' I didn't know exactly what I was going to say. But I thought to myself, 'I've got some things to say. I'm not sure what they are, but I'm going to have some things to say.' So I have taken it seriously. You know. And I've really enjoyed it.

Denise states:
And it gives you kind of a lift, you know. You don't feel like you're at the end of the line sort of thing, you know, that you have nothing worthwhile to say to someone. I've enjoyed it very much. Very, very much! And you have the feeling that – you, hope, too that some little thing you've said can help you in furthering what you want to do. That you can be a little of a part of it, no matter how small. I find it very rewarding if you can use three chapters of what I've said to further yourself – if it can help. It's a sharing of ourselves with another person. And that's very important. No doubt not all of it can be used, but at least some of it will.

Christine states:
I hope that it will give some insight to someone who may not have had the experiences that I've had. I sort of feel about my life that I have overcome a lot of obstacles. I'm still chugging along, sometimes good and sometimes bad, but mostly pretty positively. I feel okay about sharing that.

Heidi states:
Oh, I think it was good. Anything I can help to contribute for a university student, I will. Because my son went through it so I know how hard it is. For me it was hard at some points, but I have been through there many times and it was okay.

Madelaine states:

> Well, at first I didn't know if I'd be able to say anything, or I thought, 'What can I offer?' And then I thought ,'Well, if I can give my ideas, I'll give them.' Actually it's a privilege. I feel good about being able to talk about how I feel. It's a mixed feeling because I'm not as old as some and I'm older than some but I haven't done all that much in my life to be in many things I suppose. So I think 'Well, who am I?' And yet, I feel that it's nice, it's a privilege to be able to speak and say how I feel about this.
>
> Beret states:
> Well, it's different than what I had anticipated. I really didn't know what the topic was. But I don't know that I have contributed very much to it. I'm just happy to contribute to your project if it's any good, but it just seems like I'm not anybody special. And what can my ideas and my experiences contribute? They aren't very important.
>
> Elizabeth states:
> Good. Really good. We talked about process. Everything's a process, for me anyway. And I think that's life. We're in process. I'm telling you my perception of myself, in relation to your question. I know I can't give you the whole truth, you know, but I think you recognize that. The Women's Movement is very important in this evolution of consciousness. And a lot of these feminist writers are very educated women you know, very skillful about relating their experiences. And when I read something that makes me realize something that I never realized before – it's always been true, but all of a sudden – and you feel like your consciousness is expanding in terms of the whole society, of women. And I am sure that if the women you are interviewing read each other's experiences, or heard them, that it would click, with a lot of them. That, 'Yes, that's true for me, as well.' And maybe also understanding our differences.

That the effect of an intensive research interview can still be felt with the passage of time, and that the interview can precipitate a change of perception, attitude or behavior in the research subject is verified by the women's answers to a questionnaire (see Appendix C) sent out to them approximately eight months after the initial interview. Eleven of the 13 women returned the questionnaire.[15] All of these 11 reported that they had enjoyed the interview for the reasons given originally. Further, all reported a change in themselves which was varyingly viewed as subtle, as part of the process of change they already perceived themselves to be in, as specific, as general or as dramatic. Six women reported that the interview had only positive effects and five reported that the interview first precipitated some disturbing feelings, out of which came some positive resolutions.

As regards the six women who viewed the interview as having a positive effect, an experience common to these women was that the interview helped them to better understand themselves. Four of the six further explained how this increased

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[15]The two women who did not return the questionaire were contacted and they promised to return it. However, they did not. A mail strike occured during this time and may have been a factor in their failure to follow through with their promise.

understanding has led to a change in attitude, perception or behavior. They reported as follows:

> Denise:
> I felt satisfied and was glad I was able to help you reach your goal. For me it was a chance to think beyond the scope of a daily routine. I realized that we sometimes have a lot more potential than we give ourselves credit for.
>
> Jean:
> The interview focused my thinking on certain issues regarding my life that have been a recurring theme. This means to me that I am even more fixed in my ways than I thought. I was stimulated very much by the occasions. I had some great conversations with a couple of old friends soon after the time, but that wasn't new or particularly different. I wouldn't say there was no change – it was just too subtle to pick out. I felt at the time that things were already changing.
>
> Theresa:
> I learned something about myself that I was not aware of before: why I think and do things the way I have always done them. I now realize that my background has formed the kind of person I am. I got to know myself much better. The experience has made me a stronger person and will be of some help in future times. I feel that I have more confidence in myself and that I may decide to try some things that I wouldn't have tried before. The interview was handled in a tactful manner. I never once felt uncomfortable about any part of it.
>
> Mary:
> When I gave the interview I had a good feeling about it. It was a chance to take stock, get some things off my chest, organize my thoughts or feelings a bit, focus on what I was getting out of life and what I was putting into it. On reading the interview several months later, it was very interesting to see how my feelings had changed on certain things. This means to me I am always changing and must guard against feeling that things will never change or improve. I am much more aware of my ambivalences toward my children, husband, work and I accept this ambivalence as normal and part of growth. Perhaps I have gained the ability to accept myself more and certainly accept my family's changes. I think the interview helped me focus on my anger and depression and to act, for example, on my husband's procrastination with regard to his vasectomy. I think that this past year has been a time of real reflection and I think I know myself a bit more now than I did last year. Perhaps the interview started this process? I appreciated at the time the sense of unhurriedness on your part.
>
> Madelaine:
> I realized that there was a lot of areas in my life I had to work at – for example, accepting my past and believing I could overcome a lot of negative feelings or insecurities I had. I have let myself be a victim of negative ideas and I have let myself be trapped by them. Since the interview I have questioned myself, read a lot and worked out quite a few things. It made me separate what I could change or control, which I'm pleased about. It also made me take a good look at myself and my role. Now I feel I am more aware that I can do a lot for how I want our family life to be. And I've accepted "me" more. To be interviewed made me realize how important events in one's life are and how they effect us. I was surprised to be interviewed, felt it a privilege to be asked and that my ideas did count or might be of value to someone.

Beret's response to the questionnaire is reported in full because it demonstrates a dramatic change in consciousness, not just of herself but also of the devaluation of

women generally in society and of the results for women of being confined to narrow roles. Hence we witness the birth of a feminist consciousness in a woman of 69 years.

> Beret:
> After the interview I began to think about the tremendous role that women have played over the years. I feel that because women have quietly and ungrudgingly worked under difficulties raising families and making their homes comfortable, their contributions to society have been taken for granted. I now realize that each of these women, because of their varied situations and experiences, have in their minds vast stories of special knowledge and also stories of historical value. The male population especially needs to be made to recognize and give women credit for their true worth instead of taking their contribution for granted. Much of the artistic and cultural ability of some women has been and is untapped because of the tedious and demanding tasks of home-making.
>
> Because I have always felt insignificant I haven't spoken of my feelings to others but I now feel that perhaps I have influenced some citizens as years went by. I feel better about myself and as I look at my friends and other women who are strangers I wonder what they could tell if they had the opportunity and also what hidden talents they have which were never exposed or developed because their role as a homemaker was too time-consuming and demanding. I think that all women, regardless of their station in life, should be held in greater esteem and respect. Their real value to society has been played down for generations due mostly to antiquated traditions. Women have been taught to be submissive and wait on men and have been led to believe that they are less intelligent than men.
>
> The interview made me feel that the years of my life had been spent in a worthwhile manner and it lifted my spirits. When I feel depressed I recall the experience and feel better about myself personally. My opinion of all women in general has been raised and as I meet them and re-appraise them I wonder what potential is there that is being wasted. I would recommend to a friend that she do an interview because I think most women feel as I did and it would give them a better feeling about themselves and improve their outlook. They might even re-allot their time and make their lives more fruitful and enjoyable. Men need to be re-educated regarding their opinion of the role of women and wives. Many men regard wives, especially, as a property which is a means to an end. I'm not a radical but there should be a movement of some sort to better the situation.

With regard to the five women who experienced the after-effects of the interview as a mixture of disturbing feelings and positive resolutions, the common experience seemed to be that they had been reminded of painful experiences from the past and perhaps made judgments of themselves. Ultimately, however, this resulted in clearer perceptions and stronger resolutions to make changes. They reported as follows:

> Sally:
> In a lot of ways I felt so immature for letting so many things just happen to me when I should have stood up for "me," for my rights as a person. But now I feel I've come a long way. I've had to learn the hard way which has probably made me a better person today. But I wouldn't wish my life to any young girl, to be forced to face the world alone. I didn't have a chance to face the world slowly. It came all too fast. But I feel that's over, the worst part of my life, for now I feel I'm grown up to face anything. I've been trying

hard to stand up for my rights. Before I was afraid to let any person know what my life was like.

Christine:
For awhile afterwards I felt frightened that my past would keep bothering me as it had before. I had felt there were things I had talked about that were not really finished for me. However, I don't really want to deal with them anymore. I'd rather just get on with my life. I spent many years in therapy trying to learn how to accept the past. So I felt sad, ashamed and lonely for awhile after going over it all again. The interview also showed me that if I made it through the first 30 years of my life when I was not in control, then the next 30 will be fantastic because I am in control now. And that's an important realization – knowing that I have a choice. It was important to me that you have been trained in psychology. It made it easier for me to be open and honest, knowing that you had a good understanding of emotional difficulties and their cause and effect. I was honored to be chosen by you – that you would think my story would be interesting enough for your study.

Heidi:
It reminded me of a lot of things I had forgotten. It also brought out my strong feelings about the need to change to survive a bad marriage and to forget the past and look forward to a new and better future. The interview helped me to relieve my mind and you can also get some points out of it to pass on to others. Like you're supposed to help others and if you exchange experiences that could be helpful to others. I realize that the best thing for me was to get out and work and be with people. And if I hadn't done that I would be in the mental institution today. It got me out of the deep depression I was in because all of the people I worked with have been all so helpful to me, and I'm grateful to every one of them. I found a poem and I copied it down and carry it with me. "If you can imagine it, you can achieve it. If you can dream it, you can become it." That's sort of my style, too. If you want something bad enough and you work at it, you will become it.

Marcela:
I have been in a quiet depression since I last saw you, but it has been fruitful, calming and even loving. I feel something new happening inside me. I began to study the more subtle means of male power, especially how it functions to divide women. This, and subsequent thoughts, have continued to swirl in my mind since our uplifting discussion about male authority in the academic community and the double standards I understood I had cultivated as a result of my family structure. I am, as a result, working on an article on subtle means of male power, especially in intimate relationships. I am also thinking about how sisterhood is threatened by intersecting institutions such as ethnicity, jealously, success, male peers, work/projects. I learned a few earth–shattering things about myself:

1. I am politically motivated by the principle that women should do anything in their power to create bonds that can't be broken and I make no room for human emotions like jealousy, insecurity, plain meanness.
2. I have felt guilty for men and especially women who are not as smart as I am or who, for right or wrong, have not achieved what I have achieved. Feeling guilty, I often pretend to be dumber than I am, less ambitious, less able or less confident than I really am.
3. I am too preoccupied with not hurting women I think are weak or unstable on the principle that they get hurt often enough, but too often I get hurt in the process and nobody believes it.
4. I am afraid to be successful because I know how lonely it is and how many enemies one makes.
5. I am very sure about what is right or best for me, for my work, for others even; and I act as though I am not so that people won't reject me.

Elizabeth:

It is almost impossible for me to isolate the effects of the interview from the rest of my experiences in 1980. It has been a profoundly moving, changing year for me. And exhausting! What I feel now is a kind of "cosmic weariness." I suppose this weariness relates to the interview in the sense that speaking in a historical, interpretive sense about myself deepened the commitment I feel to "pushing on." The interview seemed to make concrete my dedication to my own "truth" and this has not made my life easier. Specifically, I think the interview had the following effect:

1. I got a sense of my own values and my right to pursue them. And I feel more carefree about admitting them.
2. I felt very validated by the interview – like it was okay to be myself. Maybe it had the effect of making me angry when I see anyone invalidated.
3. I think I felt very fortunate to have been listened to. It's a luxury that I don't often experience, and maybe I've never experienced it before in quite the same depth. It seemed like I was the one benefitting and you were just left with a lot of words. I know I listen better at work. I've got a really concrete idea now of validative listening.
4. I think I've given more thought to the rest of my life. It was like a "summing up" and a letting go. And now what?
5. I've been able to understand a little better the effect Vietnam had on my life. It'll take many more years to integrate it. I used to feel that my experience was too distorted by my own sense of shock and detachment to be able to say anything meaningful. Now I see my experience of shock, etc., to be my real experience, important in itself. I suffered greatly and am not ashamed of that anymore.
6. I think, too, that I don't hesitate to act anymore. I go through a "suffering" period after I run up against something but after it's over the usual result is some sort of action. I care much less about the consequences. You do what you have to do.
7. I value my religious/theological/philosophical education much more. I see the emptiness in people, the shallowness, to be partially due to their lack of deeply–rooted values.
8. More than ever I value my consciousness as my greatest possession. I can't say my life has become less painful. But it matters less because I see what happens to people who try to avoid pain.

I suppose my experience can be summed up by saying I feel more "centered." The process was more important than what exactly I did realize. It opened my eyes to the stupidity of psychiatry I had been through – the constant evaluation and interference, as if the psychiatrists were so afraid of the truth inside me that they had to do everything possible to shut it up if possible or invalidate it if it came out.

The above reports by 11 women, of how the research interview affected them, lend support to radical thinkers (Bernard, 1973a; Giorgi, 1970; Lofland, 1975; Millman & Kanter, 1975; Riegel, 1978; Schroyer, 1970; Vaughter, 1976) who critique the assumption of empirical scientists that science is neutral and objective. Further, it demonstrates that it is possible to be ethically responsible to those being researched – that the researcher can gather information in such a way as to avoid perpetuating the experience, common to research subjects, that they have been "ripped off." Instead of hiding the true nature of the study from the subjects and using the information for the benefit of the researcher or an institution, it is possible to carry on research in the form of an open and honest interaction which allows for the subject to benefit from the

process. That the research questions may have a disturbing effect on the subjects must be recognized and care taken to insure there will be time to deal with strong reactions. That the researcher's personality, skills, professional status, and gender can make a difference to how comfortable the research subjects feel and how open they will be in answering questions (i.e., how rich the data will be) has been demonstrated.

B. The Meanings of Being a Woman

The Negative Meanings of Being a Woman

Experiencing the Female Body as a Burden

Eight women experienced their body as a burden for a number of reasons. Dysmenorrhea, or menstrual distress experienced in the form of premenstrual tension, mood swings, severe pain during menstruation, and/or migraine headaches was a problem for six women. Research on physiological and emotional changes related to the menstrual cycle is confusing and non-conclusive. Arguments persist as to whether or not women actually do experience menstrual or pre-menstrual tension, and whether the cause is physiological or psychological/social (Parlee, 1973). One of the continual errors made by researchers in this field is the "Woman Error" (also made by deBeauvoir) which searches for one answer - a common experience for all women. The Woman Error is manifest in research on dysmenorrhea when it is assummed that if one woman does not experience cyclical distress, then another woman's distress does not count. The empirical method of research, insofar as it relies on objective measuring techniques and averages results, is clearly at fault in this respect. Personal reporting, which inevitably provides different results than the objective tests, is considered to be unreliable. Another fault of current research on menstrual distress is the researchers' continued attempt to link menstrual distress with gender-role attributes (i.e., masculine and feminine traits), the assumption being that menstrual distress is a product of personality rather than physiology. Similarly, research which attempts to relate menstrual distress to neurotic and psychotic symptoms (depression, anxiety, schizophrenia) assumes that dysmenorrhea exists primarily in women's minds.

Three women reported that after continual difficulties with their female physiology, they underwent hysterectomies. That women continue to suffer from physiological dysfunctioning, the solution to which is most often surgical removal of the problem part, is indicative of the lower valuing of women compared to men, according to experts (Daly, 1978; Ehrenreich & English, 1978; Penfold, 1980; Rothman, 1979). Similarly, the lack of safe and effective birth control methods (which was considered a problem by three women) is related to the fact that males do not make female problems a priority in medical research and health care. The Canadian physician, Penfold (1980) states:

> Health care services by and large focus on needs defined by white, middle-class, mostly male, decision makers.... (Money alloted for treatment and research in traditional medicine) is a choice which reflects the priorities - and anxieties - of the health care planners and physicians responsible (4-5).

That women's physiological difficulties have typically been misunderstood and that women who report having difficulties have typically been blamed is well-documented in Ehrenreich and English (1978), who also explain the historical origins of attitudes towards female physiology. Rothman (1979) maintains that the female reproductive system is defined in medicine in terms of disease or abnormality, and calls for a redefinition in terms of health. Traditional attitudes toward female physiology and female sexuality are also apparent in the reports of five women that they were unprepared for menstruation, that other peoples' attitudes made them embarassed and self-conscious and/or that they were not given adequate information about their bodies. That women are often still uneducated at puberty about their female physiology and its functioning, and remain uneducated as adults, is indicative of a cultural attitude toward female sexuality as "not nice," a holdover from Victorian times. (Ehrenreich & English, 1978).

Clearly, there is a relation between the status of women as Other, and the lack of understanding of female physiology and lack of priority given to women in health care services. Fortunately for women, their relationships to their bodies and their health was one of the first issues to be dealt with by feminist action groups. Feminist health collectives and various individual physicians have criticized traditional approaches to women's health and have done much to promote safe

birth control methods, knowledge of female physiology and self-help care for women (Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 1971; Cooke and Dworkin, 1979; Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers, 1981; Kleiber & Light, 1978; Norris, 1980; Pederson, 1979; Seaman & Seaman, 1977; Women's Healthsharing, 1979-1982). The issue of body image and women's experience of their appearance as unacceptable will be discussed under the heading, Women's Experience in Context. The issue of women's experience with the medical establishment will also be discussed in greater detail under that heading.

Four women experienced the inability to get pregnant, unwanted pregnancies, the fear of becoming pregnant, and having to always take the responsibility for not becoming pregnant as burdens. Two women experienced poor health as a burden. These topics, too, will be discussed under the heading, "Women's Experience in Context."

Struggling Against the Effects of Sexual Abuse in the Family

Four women suffered extreme abuse within their families: two were sexually abused by their fathers during childhood and two were battered wives. The effect on the two women in this study of having been sexually abused by their fathers was traumatic, as they explained. Elizabeth felt herself to be stigmatized as a child and Christine felt powerless and ashamed. Both women became severely depressed as young adults and required years of intensive therapy to work through their feelings and gain a positive sense of self. That these women were affected so severely is in keeping with the literature on incest victims which evidences the long-term effects on women of sexual abuse in the family. Experts explain that sexual abuse of children is most often perpetrated by the father, a man whose love and protection is supposed to be forthcoming and who is supposed to be respected, and is typically repeated many times over several years. The effect on women who are victims of such abuse can be extremely negative (Butler, 1978; Herman & Hirschman, 1977; MacFarlane, 1978; Rush, 1980). Herman and Hirschman (1977) explain that guilt and depression are universal clinical findings in father/daughter incest cases. Further, they explain that the effect on girls of having a sexually abusive father is so destructive that it dominates their young lives

and leaves long lasting emotional scars. MacFarlane names the key factors in determining how a child reacts to being sexually abused as the age and developmental status of the child, the relationship of the abuser to the child, the amount of force or violence used by the abuser, the degree of shame or guilt evoked in the child, and most importantly, the reactions of the child's parents and/or professionals who become involved. Key to understanding the reactions of Elizabeth and Christine, according to this analysis, is the fact that it was their father who was the perpetrator, and that they felt ashamed and guilty. Christine's fear of her father's frequently violent behaviour, and Elizabeth's further victimization by psychiatrists who failed to take seriously the psychological damage done to her and who instead accused her of fantasizing her abuse, dreaming it or inviting it, would also be considered by MacFarlane to be important factors. In addition, the fact that both women experienced sexual abuse repeatedly over a number of years, and that their sexual abuse was part of a general experience of exploitation and emotional neglect by both parents, seems important.

The importance of professionals' reactions to a victim's experience with incest was noted by MacFarlane, as is described above. Elizabeth's experience of being told by various psychiatrists that she imagined or invited her abuse is not unusual. As a therapist working with incest victims, I have been told numerous stories about psychiatrists and psychologists refusing to believe women's accounts of their assaults. Recently, one client reported that her psychiatrist responded to her story of her father's sexual assault with the following remark: "He must have been gentle with you so it couldn't have been that bad." Lerman's work on Freud exposed the tradition whereby psychiatrists (and psychologists who read psychoanalytic theory) learn to disbelieve women's stories of their father's sexual assaults. Thus psychiatrists (and psychologists) who have not been taught to critically examine Freud's theories and practices continue to disbelieve women. In other words, the message to women has been: "I can't deal with your experience so I'll negate it." Leidig (1980), whose client reported to her that her former psychiatrist got an erection as he listened to her account of her incest trauma, believes that generally male therapists have difficulty identifying with female

victims of sexual violence and instead identify with the male perpetrator. She concludes that male therapists should not be allowed to counsel incest victims. Many sexual assault centres, whose perspective is feminist, are aware of this same issue, and have formed the policy of allowing only women to work on their distress lines.

Researchers and people working with incest victims have noticed an increase in the reporting of incest over the past few years, although they maintain that we are still seeing only "the tip of the iceberg" (MacFarlane, 1978; Rush, 1980). Statistics from the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (1982) show that calls relating to assaults on children rose from 30 in 1977 to 128 in 1981. Further, their statistics show that reports of current incest increased from 20 to 28 and reports of past incest increased from 33 to 46, from the periods January–June, 1981 to January–June, 1982. The increase in reporting is interpreted as not necessarily reflecting an increase in incest, but as reflecting victims' recognition that it is permissible to talk about the subject. Rush, in her book, The Best Kept Secret (1980), explains how incest has been with us through the ages, and that knowledge of the sexual abuse of children has been the best kept secret in families across time, cultures, class, race and religions. That the family has been a social unit (sanctified by religious institutions and protected by the law) which gives men power over women and children has both encouraged men and protected them in their abuse of children. The status of women and children as subordinate to men (as Other) clearly affects their vulnerability, both to the male heads of families and to the male professionals to whom they turn for help after the initial damage is done. Much still needs to be done to help girls and women who have been incest victims according to researchers in the area. A change in social attitudes and structures (legal, economic, medical) which protect the advocates of incest (many of whom benefit financially from the sale of materials which exploit children as sexual objects) and which view incest as harmless to children (and even promote it as healthy and beneficial to children) also needs to be changed (Barry, 1979; Brownmiller, 1975; Ford, 1982; Rush, 1980).

Like incest, wife battering is considered a seriously underreported crime, with experts estimating that only one in 10 women report battering assaults (Alberta Society of Women Against Violence, 1982). However, from research done on women who do report being battered, it is evident that as with incest victims, battered women are found in all age groups, races, ethnic, religious and social-economic groups, and at all educational levels (Chegwidden, Felt & Miller, 1981; Walker, 1978). The common experiences of Heidi and Sally, the women in this study who were battered, was that they were abused psychologically as well as physically; the battering was unpredictable; their husbands were highly jealous, critical and threatening; and they themselves felt a need to conceal the battery. Further, both women had reasons for not leaving these marriages. Heidi saw herself as having no alternatives and no means of supporting herself and her children. She also believed the religious and social ideology which taught that a family must be headed by a man and that forbade divorce. Staying with her husband would enable her to give her children an education, she reasoned. She finally left her husband after 26 years of marriage. Sally understood that her young husband was too young to settle down, thus rationalized his abuse of her and resolved to keep trying to make their marriage work. She left the abusive relationship after two years of marriage.

Both Sally and Heidi suffered severe emotional and mental trauma as a result of their repeated battering experiences. Research on battered wives indicates that women do not stay in battering relationships because they like being beaten, as was once assumed by therapists who believed that women were essentially masochistic. Rather, women have stayed in battering relationships because of economic, legal and social dependence and because they have had no safe place to go. In most large Canadian cities women now have the alternative of seeking emergency shelter at a refuge for battered women and their children where supportive and career counselling is available. In Edmonton, WIN House (established in 1978) and WIN House II (established in 1982) operate to meet this need. This option was not available to Sally and Heidi when they were being battered, however. Statistics published by WIN House News (1981) show a steady

increase in the number of women and their families applying for accommodation in the first year and a half of operation. After this period, the number of applicants in a month stabilized to the present number: on the average, 18 to 21 families have been accommodated (for a maximum of three weeks each) and 40 families have been turned away each month, due to lack of space. Thus, in Edmonton, the need for a safe alternative for battered women and their families has still not been met. The nature of referrals has changed over the years, however. Whereas in the early months most women were referred to WIN House through social service agencies, the police, the Crisis Unit, etc., the majority of applicants are now self-referrals.

Providing emergency shelters and counselling services is only part of the solution according to Martin (1978) who states:

> Any solution to family violence must address the values and structure of society that permits and perpetuates crimes against women (p. 111).

Using deBeauvoir's terminology, we might state that any solution to family violence must address the values and structures of society which perceive and treat women as Other. According to experts, women who are battered by their husbands are also victims of a social structure whose laws have until recently condoned a husband's right to beat his wife and to retain full ownership of a family business upon marriage breakdown, whose economic practices limit the means by which women can become financially independent, whose differential socializing techniques teach boys that it is masculine for them to be aggressive and teach girls that it is feminine for them to be submissive, and whose religious institutions sanction the subjection of wives to their husbands (Barry, 1979; Martin, 1978; Walker, 1978, 1979). Fortune and Horman (1980), investigating religious issues in family violence, conclude that misuse and misinterpretation of the Judeo-Christian Tradition has had a detrimental effect on victims of family violence in so far as "It has contributed substantially to guilt, self-blame, and suffering which victims experience, and to the rationalization often used by offenders" (pp. 72-73). That the economic, legal and educational factors play a part is also verified in the research. In a follow-up study of formerly battered women, Ellsworth and Wagner (1980) determined that factors enabling women to stay out of a battering relationship were as follows: employment (67%), legal support (26%), education

(20%). Personal counselling was considered to be helpful by only 10% of the women studied. The authors concluded that traditional mental health settings were considered to be unsatisfactory because they lacked understanding of battered women's problems and were unable to offer concrete support.

Understanding that traditional mental health agencies have not been successful in helping battered women, feminists have attempted to understand the complex psychological reasons which have also played a part in keeping women in a battering situation (Barry, 1979; Martin, 1978; Painter, 1981; Walker, 1978, 1979). Walker (1978, 1979) believes that Seligman's theory of learned helplessness applies to battered wives – that women do not attempt to free themselves from a battering relationship because they are operating from a belief in their own helplessness. In other words, women have accepted the marriage relationship as unequal (their husbands have more power), do not expect to have control in their marriages because as women they are taught to be passive and submissive, and finally do become helpless, as they believe themselves to be. Painter (1981) has likened the emotional bonding between battered women and their partners to the emotional attachments formed by victims of cults, hostages, etc. to their oppressors, labelling this "traumatic bonding" (p. 57). Typical of traumatic bonding, she explains, are the features of power inbalance and intermittent violence. Under these circumstances, women tend to take responsibility for their partner's violent behavior. Their inability to control their husbands' behavior contributes to their sense of powerlessness and low self-esteem, which undercuts any attempts to leave the relationship. Clearly, these women have learned to perceive and experience themselves as Other. On the bright side, however, there is some evidence that the Women's Movement, which has increased public awareness regarding family violence, has been effective in reducing the rate of wife and child abuse. The fight for higher social status and greater economic power for women has had the effect of increasing women's sense of self-esteem and of encouraging them to reject their subordinate status in the family. Concludes American sociology professor, Murray Strauss, "The more equality you have in a home, the less likelihood there is of physical abuse of any

members" (1981). The conclusions and results reported by Martin and by Straus are a direct challenge to deBeauvoir's idea that the solution for women (whose psychology she believes reflects their status as Other) resides in their individual choice. Choice, it appears, is only a factor when safe alternatives are available, when society offers women equal opportunities, and when there is an ideology which supports and values women. Given the current state of lack of alternatives and opportunities for women and the presence of ideologies which support women's subordination, Heidi's and Sally's decisions to stay in their marriage as long as they did can also be understood as a choice based on intention. Heidi intended to provide her children with an education, Sally intended to give her husband time to mature, and both women intended to make a success of their marriages and to provide their children with a father.

Being Vulnerable to the Risk of Sexual Harrassment or Assault in the Community

Sexual assault and/or sexual harassment had been experienced and was reported to be an issue by seven of the 13 participants. The women had been variously assaulted by fellow students, friends, a delivery man and therapists, and had been harassed by clients, co-workers, a teacher and an employer. Their personal reactions varied from mild annoyance at inappropriate sexual advances, to frustration and depression related to a perceived inability to change the situation, to severe trauma related to job loss and expulsion from school as a result of trying to fight for the right not to be harassed. The participants were well aware, at the same time, that complaining about being assaulted or harassed could result in their being blamed for perpetuating the crime or having their integrity questioned. Thus it appears they were conscious that the "blame the victim" mentality (Ryan, 1976) operates against women (as it does against racial minority groups).

These results lend support to the literature which documents the widespread incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment of women by men (Barry, 1979; Becker & Abel, 1978; Brownmiller, 1975; Chapman, 1978; Evans, 1978; Kadar, 1982; MacKinnon, 1979; Storrie & Dykstra, 1982). Current feminist analyses have linked the various kinds of violence toward women (sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape, incest, battery, pornography, prostitution, etc.) to

prevailing stereotypes of women as good and sexless (like Mary) or bad and sexy (like Eve), to the subordinate position of women in relation to men, and to the barriers in society which keep women dependent on men and therefore powerless to change their situations (Barry, 1979; Becker & Abel, 1978; Chapman, 1978; Dworkin, 1974; Gates, 1978). Further, there is evidence supporting the feminist position that violence against women is generally considered "normal" and that forced sexuality is generally accepted (Check & Malamuth, 1981). Stark-Adamec & Adamec (1981) reviewed the literature on aggression against women and concluded:

> there has to be a climate in which aggression is both condoned and reinforced, a climate in which asymmetrical sex roles are adopted and the female devalued, for men to choose aggression as a response and women as a target for aggression (p. 59).

That the damage done to women (psychologically, socially, economically) who are victims of sexual assault or sexual harassment can be severe and long-lasting has been well documented (Backhouse & Cohen 1981; Kadar, 1982; Lear, 1978; MacKinnon, 1979; Saltzman, 1978). Further, that women who complain about harassment or who are victims of assault are likely to be blamed rather that defended, is evidenced in the research. A study by Briere, Malmuth, & Check (1981) on sexual attitudes and pro-rape beliefs produced results which suggest "that attitudes justifying rape and other sexual violence...occur among 'typical' individuals" (p. 49). That the prevailing attitude toward violence against women is one of acceptance, and that the typical reaction to a woman who has been a victim of sexual violence is that "she deserved it," supports the position of deBeauvoir that the social status of woman is as Other. Kadar (1982) maintains that sexual harassment of women works as a method of social control to keep women "in their place." Fox (1977) shares this view, explaining that the concept of "nice girl" restricts where women go and effectively keeps them out of men's way. However, it does not follow that women necessarily experience themselves as Other just because they are defined as such. The seven women in this study who had experienced sexual assault or harassment perceived this experience as negative and reacted against it. None of these women accepted violence against women fatalistically or felt that "they had it coming." Janeway (1980) interprets

this kind of resistence against being judged or blamed as one of the "powers of the weak." My experience counselling victims of sexual assault (and rape and incest) is that women requiring therapy frequently blame themselves in the early stages of therapy. (This blaming of self is analagous to the guilt felt by incest victims and the taking of responsibility for their assaults by battered women. All instances reflect the tendency of women and other members of minority status groups to denigrate themselves.) In this stage the women certainly experience themselves as Other. The immediate goal of the therapist in these situations is to help women to understand that the aggressors, not themselves, are responsible for the violence. In other words, the job of the therapist is to help women to experience themselves as Subject, not as Other.

Being Frustrated and in Conflict in the Roles of Wife and Mother

Being a woman also resulted in negative meaning for women in terms of the *roles* of wife and mother which they were *expected* to play. This finding supports the vast amount of literature (from the early feminist writings of the 1970s to the present) which documents how sex-role stereotyping has been problematic for women (Bardwick, 1979; Bernard, 1973a, 1974; Bird, 1971; Deaux, 1976; Donelson & Gullahorn, 1977; Fransella & Frost, 1977; Freeman, 1979; Friedan, 1963; Garskof, 1971; Glazer & Waehrer, 1977; Gornick & Moran, 1977; Greer, 1971; Janeway, 1971, 1974; Klein, 1972; Lerner, 1977; Morgan, 1970; Millet, 1971; Juliet Mitchell, 1973; Rothman, 1978; Safilios-Rothschild, 1977; Stanford, 1974; Sullerot, 1971; Unger, 1979; Washbourn, 1977; Weitz, 1977; Weitzman, 1979; Williams, 1977).

The *role* of wife was experienced as problematic for three out of six women currently married and for six out of seven women previously married. Specifically, this role was experienced negatively insofar as the women experienced a double standard in marriage with fewer rights and privileges given to wives, a devaluing of wives' work both in and outside the home, an assumption that it was the exclusive *duty* of wives to maintain the home and the psychological health of all family members, and an expectation that a wife *should be* emotionally, socially and financially dependent on her husband. In other words, these woman

experienced what Unger (1979) refers to as the institutionalization of male authority in marriage. Thus, the experience of the women in nine out of 13 marriages reflects the social status of women as Other. In practice as well as in theory, then, it has been demonstrated that the subordinate status of women in marriage reflects women's social status as Other. The relation, for women, between marriage and poor mental health has long been established (Gove & Tudor, 1973). More recently, Gede (1979) has established a correlation between marriage and depression for women. Greenglass (1981) maintains that marriage is still psychologically detrimental to women's health, as well as being socially and legally detrimental due to women's subordinate status in marriage. The married participants variously reacted to the double standard in marriage, their subordinate role, or the expectations placed on them as wives, with frustration, resentment, anger and depression.

That, in the majority of marriages, the women at various times suffered emotionally in relation to their role as wife suggests that to some extent at least they experienced themselves psychologically as Other. Brook's (1980) study on marital power supports this interpretation. Defining marital power as having two components, interpersonal power (over others) and self-power (having control and choice) he found that low self-power in women correlated with depression, and high self-power with marriage instability. In other words, women's choice was to rock the boat or get sick. Separation and/or divorce was certainly seen by the five participants who had this experience as a means to their gaining greater self-power (i.e., becoming Subject instead of Other). Even participants who had not been separated or divorced, however, did not passively or entirely accept this status, and it is also clear that they did not simply perceive of themselves as Other. For example, Joan accepted her subordinate status and devalued role in the early years of her marriage and consequently became severely depressed. With the blessing of her doctor she went to work part-time, felt more independent, experienced a sense of freedom and her health improved. Today she resents the double standard in her marriage, is working full-time in a career she enjoys despite her husband's lack of support, and desires to be treated as an equal partner by her

husband. At the same time she sometimes feels guilty for acting on her own behalf and is hesitant to communicate her feelings about changing the family's place of residence. What we see is a woman struggling against the assumptions made by her husband, and generally structured in marriage, that she is Other. In this struggle there are areas where Joan has achieved a true sense of herself as Subject of her life, and other areas where she continues to operate as Other. An examination of her married history reveals that at different stages she experienced herself as Other to different degrees and that her mental health deteriorated or improved in direct relation to her sense of self.

The struggle against being Other in the role of wife was the experience of women in nine out of a total of 13 marriages in this study. As well as relating to women's subordination in marriage, the experience of Other might also be related to the relatively powerless position of a housewife. Fransella and Frost (1977) discuss the lack of real control over events experienced by housewives as the most stressful aspect of the job. Recognizing the lack of power experienced by women who as housewives generally are dependent on their husbands and children for a sense of self-worth, feminist researchers are investigating the experiences of such women - women who in mid-life are now experiencing a crisis (Rubin, 1979; Sanguiliano, 1980). I have witnessed the same phenomena in women who take the Second Look course I teach through the Women's Program, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta. Typically, these women lack self-confidence and a sense of self-worth, having long ago conceded to their subordinate role in marriage or having lost confidence in their ability to be meaningfully involved in their community. Through exercises in self-awareness, improving communication skills, assessing strengths and abilities, raising level of consciousness, examining alternatives and building a support system, they come to experience themselves as Subject instead of Other.

Loss of marriage through death was a negative experience for two participants (Denise and Sally), even though Sally's marriage had been largely destructive for her. In addition to emotional loss these women experienced financial hardship, social difficulties, and the stress of being single parents. Barrett

(1977) has documented the experiences and problems of widows. She maintains that many of the stresses of widowhood could be avoided if social attitudes changed and if social institutions were more supportive.

As regards the remaining four marriages, one woman did not speak of her marriage at all, and two women felt equal in their marriages (one in her current marriage and one in both her current and past marriages). These latter two women had both been taught deliberately by one or both parents that as women they were of equal value to men and deserved to be respected. In other words, they had been taught early to think of themselves as Subject and to expect others to treat them as Subject as well.

The *role* of mother was problematic for six of the eight women who were mothers, in so far as they were *expected* to be exclusively responsible for child care and perceived this as unfair or burdensome, they were *expected* to be naturally and consistently nurturing and felt guilty when they were not, they were *expected* to obtain satisfaction from nurturing their children and to not require further satisfaction from other work, they were isolated in their homes and lacked contact with other adults, they became exhausted or depressed from being continually (and often exclusively) responsible for their children, and/or they experienced conflict with regard to their desire to develop their own identities or careers and their simultaneous desire to be "good mothers." Further, the women were additionally frustrated or overwhelmed by circumstances outside of their control (unsupportive or abusive husbands, poverty, lack of adequate day care, lack of emotional or social support, too many additional responsibilities, etc.) which made the job of nurturing more difficult. Thus, the *role* of mother, which is assumed to be based on women's *natural* abilities and to involve activities which therefore *should be* desireable and fulfilling, is demonstrated to be problematic. The conflict, frustration, and exhaustion variously experienced by the six mothers in this study supports this. (The two women who did not experience the role of mother as negative were now grandmothers. When their children were small they also had been involved in their paid work.) Further, the guilt experienced by the women is indicative of their struggles with the expectations they experience in the

role of mother. The problems of women who in their roles of mother are expected to be all-giving are outlined by Albert (1971) in her article, "The Unmothered Woman." In an article entitled, "Taking on the Double Day," Luxton (1981) addresses the problems faced by women who take on paid work and in addition assume total responsibility for family and household maintenance. Woolsey-Toews (1975) relates the expectations on women to be always nurturing, responsible for others and self-sacrificing to their self-devaluation. She states:

> The 'long suffering' aspect of traditional femininity which makes so many women bear the brunt of family problems, nurturing others almost beyond their own endurance and leaving so little room in their lives for their own needs and self-development may well be an aspect of this sense of self-devaluation (p. 33).

It seems, then, that as regards the role of mother, the expectation is that women be Other. For the women in this study, difficulty with the role of mother evoked more guilt than did the role of wife. Thus it may be that women who are mothers may be at greater risk of experiencing themselves as Other than are women who are simply wives but not mothers. Support for this interpretation is found in a recent study by Brooks (1980) on marital power. She determined that women's marital power was adversely affected by increased numbers of children and the higher status of husbands.

It appears that the younger women in this study were more willing than women of their mother's generation to admit to feelings of dissatisfaction in the roles of wife and mother. Rossi (1972) has written that women are more likely to express ambivalence or negative feelings about roles which are optional. One of the goals of the Women's Movement has been to make women aware of their choices as regards marriage and motherhood, as well as other issues. Perhaps the younger participants' willingness to discuss their negative feelings about being wives and mothers is related in part to their seeing marriage and motherhood as an option. In any case, when the roles of wife and mother do not fit, it appears that women are left without guidelines or support for breaking with tradition. Fransella & Frost (1977) support this interpretation, and explain as follows:

> In other words, when a woman knows that she does not fit the expected roles, she has got problems. She may be uncomfortable with the traditional pattern, but she still does not know how to be happy, or accepted, if she steps out of it. Compared with her, the more 'traditional' woman has an easier time of it (p. 83).

Experiencing Sexist Attitudes and Discriminatory Practices in Relation to Education and Career

Being subject to sexist attitudes or discriminatory practices which limited their length and choice of formal education and/or their career choice and advancement has been a negative experience for 10 of the 13 women interviewed. These findings lend support to the vast amount of literature which has documented the problems for women of living in a society whose dominant attitudes toward them are sexist and whose educational and economic structures and policies discriminate against them (Bird, 1971; Chesler & Goodman, 1976; Connelly, 1978; Epstein, 1971; Fransella & Frost, 1977; Friedan, 1963; Garskof, 1971; Glazer & Waehrer, 1977; Gornick & Moran, 1971; Janeway, 1971; Lerner, 1977; Juliet Mitchell, 1971; Mitchell & Oakley, 1976; Oakley, 1974; Rothman, 1978; Rowbotham, 1974; Stanford, 1974; Stephenson, 1973; Sullerot, 1971). According to Isaacs (1981), while attitudes toward women's performance has changed somewhat over the 70s, women continue to be valued as less capable than men unless they show signs of obvious success and high status, or have already distinguished themselves in their field. Still, then, research findings demonstrate what deBeauvoir has termed women's status as Other in regard to education and paid work. However, according to the reports of the participants, it does not always follow that women psychologically experience themselves simply as Other in the face of sexism and discrimination. This can be true to a greater or lesser extent for some women at certain times in particular circumstances. For example, Joan and Madelaine were *channeled* into secretarial school at ages 16 and 18, Marcela entered a fashion designing program and Alice a home economics program because they were *acceptable* fields for women. Dissatisfied with these "choices," all of these women eventually left or changed vocations. Madelaine is now a full-time homemaker and Alice operates a restaurant. Neither of these women perceive sexist attitudes or discriminatory practices in their present work. However, Joan and Marcela, both of whom have since entered male-dominated

professions, have continued to experience sexism and discrimination. Specifically, Joan has been aware of sexist attitudes toward her in her former work as a ceramic tile installer and today she is aware of discriminatory practices against women in the area of commercial real estate. The sexist attitudes she experienced while operating a ceramic tile business did not prevent her from carrying on. However, she has to this point been sufficiently discouraged by discriminatory practices in commercial real estate to not attempt to enter that specialty. She is fully conscious that it is her opportunity that is limited, however, and does not assume that she is, therefore, less capable than men. What we see, then, is Joan actively rejecting other's evaluations of her as Other in the first situation, and being confronted and discouraged by barriers which assume her Otherness in the second situation. In neither circumstance does she psychologically experience herself as Other, however, conscious as she is that the reason for the sexism and discrimination that she experiences lies in factors external to herself. Marcela, on the other hand, appears to experience herself as Other psychologically, in spite of the fact that she rejects the status of women as Other. In her studies at the university in a field which is entirely male-dominated, she persists with her work and is highly successful. Yet she continually doubts her abilities, believing at some level that because she is female she can never be as good as the male professors she emulates. Consequently, she is highly anxious.

There are theories which attempt to describe the situations which give rise to women's difficulty in relation to education and paid work, and which explain women's response to these situations. Freeman (1975, 1979) has formulated the "null environment hypothesis" to explain the lack of reinforcement received by female students compared to males. Even an academic setting which neither encourages nor discourages students of either sex is discriminating, she maintains, given that females are socialized to expect low achievement for themselves and to rely on external sources for their self-esteem. Attribution research demonstrates that women and men generally do not experience success the same way because women have been socialized to be helpless and to view themselves as incompetent and unsuccessful (Gannon, 1980; Lips, 1979). Lips (1979) explains that even when

women's behavior is viewed by others to be a demonstration of power and strength, women may maintain a self-image of weakness and powerlessness. This theory can help us to understand Marcela's experience of herself as Other in spite of her outward success. It does not help us to understand Joan's experience, however. Anyon's (1981) work on women's accommodation and resistance to the confines of femininity speaks to both women's experience. She has demonstrated that women neither totally accept nor totally reject social expectations that they be feminine. Rather, they actively resist their definition in some ways and accommodate in others. In her words,

> Most women neither totally acquiesce to nor totally resist the social imperatives of femininity. Rather, most women engage in daily (and usually unconscious) attempts to resist the psychological degradation and low self-esteem that would result from total application of the attitudes and behaviors of submissiveness, dependency, passivity. Women's attempts to negotiate these demands - to mediate the contradiction between femininity and competence as it is socially defined - exhibit resistance and accommodation in the dialectic proposed by Genovese for Blacks: accommodation that embodies resistance; and resistance that is embedded in daily accommodations (p. 18).

Using Anyon's theory we can begin to understand how participants have both resisted and accommodated to the confines of femininity. Joan, for example, can be seen to resist the expectation that women's *proper place* is in the home (although in her early married life she accommodated to this expectation), and has proceeded to work outside of her home. In doing so she has actively resisted her husband's and his friends' assumptions that she is not capable of being a financial success. In this sense she has rejected her status as Other. At the same time, Joan outwardly accommodates to the role of wife by allowing her husband to make major decisions such as the family's place of residence. However, she inwardly judges the relationship to be unfair, resents that her husband "needs to be the boss" and desires to feel an equal partner in the marriage. Anyon (1981) calls this kind of outer accommodation and inner resistance the public/private discrepancy in women's accommodation and resistance. She explains that while women may resist the definition of femininity inwardly, they may outwardly appear accommodating. In other words, while a woman's overt behavior gives the impression that she perceives herself as Other (Joan's accommodation to her

husband's need to be "the boss") she may covertly resist the definition of Other (Joan's resentment of the double standard in her marriage and judgement that it is unfair). The opposite can also happen. Anyon explains that a public/private discrepancy occurs when women publically resist the stereotype but accommodate internally by devaluing themselves or other women. An example of this phenomenon is Marcela's public resistance to women's inferior status through active organization on behalf of women's concerns, and her private accommodation in the form of her personal self-doubt academically (in spite of her numerous awards, etc.) and her devaluing of her own and other women's emotions. Thus, what may appear to be a rejection of women's status as Other may hide a psychological experience of Otherness.

Anyon's theory of accommodation and resistance allows us to understand the complexity of women's psychological experience to the status of Other. It also helps us to understand that women's experience can change over time. However, in order to understand why particular women accommodate to or resist social expectations, and what is operating when they change their behavior, goals or attitudes toward themselves, we need to examine the context of their experience. This will be done in the final section of this chapter.

Experiencing Sexist Attitudes and Discriminary Practises in the Community Generally

Expectations that they *should* look and act feminine, be married, stay home, restrict their type of work and be satisfied with no or low wages, and that they are *naturally* less intelligent and less capable but more nurturing than men, were experienced negatively by eight of the 13 participants. That the definitions of what women *should* be or *naturally* are reflect women's subordinate status to men and their devaluation compared to men is well established in the literature, as has already been demonstrated above. That the definition and devaluation of femininity reflects women's social status as Other has also been demonstrated. However, as has been demonstrated in relation to other dimensions of the participants' lives, it does not automatically follow that these women experienced themselves as Other. Again, Anyon's (1981) theory of resistance and accommodation is helpful in

understanding how the women reacted to their definition as Other. For example, Beret describes herself as having always been a "tomboy" who resisted any restrictions on her *behavior*. However, she accepted the judgment of her mother and a woman in her community that her *appearance* was not acceptable because she was big and tall (i.e., she did not resemble the small and dainty feminine ideal). Thus, in one sense (in regard to behavior) Beret rejected her definition as Other, and in another sense (in regard to appearance) she experienced herself psychologically as Other. In fact she has been self-conscious about her size and appearance her whole life and at age 69 continues to judge herself in this respect. In order to understand why Beret resisted expectations regarding her behavior but accommodated to expectations regarding her appearance, we would need to investigate more thoroughly the context of her experience. Again, this will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

For Jean and Alice, not being married means being judged as being unsuccessful as women. It is widely evidenced that the idea that women must be married reflects patriarchal assumptions that women's sexuality must be controlled and that women should be dependent on and subordinate to men who are their moral and intellectual superiors. Agonito (1977) illustrates the origin of these patriarchal assumptions in the writings of Genesis, Aristotle, Plutarch, Paul, Augustine; through Aquinas, Bacon, Rousseau, Hume, Kant and Hegel; to Schopenhauer, Darwin, Nietzsche and Freud. That women who do not conform to social expectations relating to marriage are judged to be abnormal, deviant or "unlucky oddities" has also been illustrated (Bernard, 1973a; Janeway, 1971). Safilios-Rothschild (1977) relates the disdain for unmarried women to the fact of women being treated as objects - single women are not valuable because they have not been chosen by a man (who is Subject and has the power to choose). As a result of being treated like objects, women's self-concept is affected, she maintains - they become "psychologically unequal" (p. 3). This may, indeed, explain the anxiety and sense of unworthiness experienced by Jean in regard to her single status. It does not, however, speak to Alice's present attitude of accepting, liking and enjoying herself as a single woman. Alice explains that as a child she judged

single women to be unsuccessful, largely because she assumed them to be sexless. She believes that later, as a young adult, she avoided taking responsiblity for her life because she was "waiting for the right man" to give her life meaning. At age 31 she decided not to wait any longer and to pursue a goal of her own making. At this point she was no longer perceiving herself as Other and through her action began to experience herself as the Subject of her life. Now her aunts' judgments of her as unsuccessful because she is single hurt only momentarily because she does not judge herself on the same terms, unlike Jean.

Denise and Sally have experienced sexist attitudes concerning women's capabilities and intelligence. Both women reject these attitudes, however, believing that women are as capable and intelligent as men. Thus, while perceiving attitudes which reflect women's status as Other, they resist these judgments with regard to themselves and other women – they do not experience themselves psychologically as Other. Denise explains that 10 years ago she was not conscious of sexist attitudes. Having been brought up by parents who believed in women's equal worth and intelligence, she assumed that everyone believed the same. Now she recognizes this assumption not to be true. At the same time she did once experience herself as Other in that she learned that as a woman she was expected to sacrifice her own needs for others. Having become conscious that this expectation on women is unfair and unhealthy, she now feels it is her right to express her own needs. In this sense she now experiences herself as Subject. Denise has also experienced discrimination because of her age – an attitude toward her on the part of a young man who assumed she could be easily dismissed or ignored because she was "just an old lady." According to Bell (1979) women suffer from discrimination in relation to age more so than do men. Feminist researchers have developed another area of expertise in relation to the double status of Other experienced by older women (Abu-Laden, 1981; Markson & Hess, 1980; Sontag, 1979).

Theresa has experienced sexist attitudes on the part of a teacher who discriminated against the girls in his class, on the part of neighbors who judged her for doing "men's work" and on the part of community members who refused to

take seriously the women's concerns regarding a community project. In all situations Theresa rejected the judgment that she was Other. In Anyon's (1981) words, she resisted the definitions of femininity which limited her concept of self, restricted her activities and devalued her concerns. Theresa also rejects the judgments made on women she works with, that they are Other in that the work they do in the home is not valued, the work they do outside the home is not paid well, and their morality is questioned when they enter fields of work traditionally defined as "men's work." Like Theresa, Elizabeth resists the definition of herself and other women as Other – that they are subordinate to and less valuable than men. She is actively attempting to change people's awareness by producing statistics in her field of work which evidence women's oppression by sexist attitudes and discriminatory practices. Elizabeth's experience with the men in her office is that they negate the validity of the statistics she presents, much to her amazement. There is evidence in the literature that whereas women have become more aware of women's real potential and worth, men have not. In 1968, Goldberg produced evidence showing that both females and males stereotyped and devalued women. More than a decade later, Percival and Percival (1979, 1982) demonstrated that men but not women stereotype women and perceive them as different and as unequal. They explain that men continue to see women in relation to their own needs (as loving, emotional, sensitive, sensuous and submissive) rather than as their equals – that in men's eyes a woman "is someone to love, perhaps, more than someone to respect" (1979, p.77). It appears, then, that during the 1970s (the years when the Women's Movement blossomed) women's perceptions and judgments of women changed but men's did not. This finding lends support to the results of this study which demonstrate that although women's status and formal definition is Other, women in some ways or to some degree reject this status and experience themselves psychologically as Subject.

The Positive Meanings of Being a Woman

The positive meanings of being a woman, while demonstrating that women do not simply experience themselves as Other, are also important to examine in order that we understand the ways women find their lives as women to be satisfying.

Being Womanly, Feminine, Sexual, or Desirable

The first category of positive meanings involved women's comfort and/or enjoyment in relation to their physical sense of self, varyingly referred to as "womanhood," "femininity," "sexuality" or "attractiveness." Most of the participants (11/13) experienced themselves positively in this sense, although for some it seemed a major issue and for others it was minor. Thus, it appears that these women to various degrees experienced themselves in relation to their bodies as Subject. This result challenges the position of deBeauvoir that women are psychologically Other. That the women felt differently about their physical selves over time is also evidenced. Marcela, Joan and Mary discuss the changes in their feelings toward sex and changes in levels of sexual activity; Christine discusses how her sexual focus has changed from men to women; and Madelaine discusses how being seen as attractive by men has changed in meaning to her, from being powerful to being appreciated. Thus it appears that over time, women's experience of their sexual or womanly selves can change. Further, it appears that the change sometimes involves a sense of self as varyingly Other or Subject. Mary, for example, has varyingly experienced her sexual self as Subject and as Other. With her first husband she experienced herself as Subject prior to their marriage; after the marriage, when she began to feel exploited, she experienced herself as Other; and finally, reaffirming her self as Subject she refused sexual contact with him. Christine experienced herself sexually as Other with her husband; when she left him and became sexually involved with a woman she experienced herself as Subject.

It is important here to take a closer look at the meanings five women have for the term, "feminine," used by them to describe their physical sense of self. Feminine has traditionally and historically been used to describe the character of women – the personality traits and behaviors of women thought to be somehow based in female physiology (Klein, 1971; Laidlaw, 1978). Although the traits associated with femininity have varied somewhat over time, current trait theory associates the qualities of passivity, weakness, emotionality, submissiveness, and dependence with femininity. In this study, only one of the five women (Alice) who

described themselves as "feminine" also considered herself to be weak, submissive and dependent. The other four women experienced themselves varyingly as strong, determined, rebellious, active and aggressive. In describing their femininity, these four women were not speaking of the character traits traditionally associated with femininity, but of their female sexuality. Therefore, a close examination of what Alice and Theresa, for example, mean when they refer to themselves as feminine reveals a great difference in meaning. To Theresa, being feminine means she is appreciated as a woman as well as for her capabilities – that her female sexuality is acknowledged and that it is respected. At the same time as being feminine, Theresa feels she can be capable, strong, independent, a thinker and a fighter if need be. To Alice, being feminine means being charming, sweet, quiet and subordinate to men. She, too, sees herself as capable and independent but not as aggressive. Unlike Theresa, who will confront situations directly and stand up for herself and others, Alice consciously uses her "feminine wiles" to charm and manipulate others and thereby influence their behavior. To her, being feminine means she does not behave aggressively in her job, and that in her relationships with men she generally acts in a submissive and dependent manner. From the outside, then, it appears that Theresa defines her feminine self as Subject while Alice defines her feminine self as Other. However, a closer examination of what Alice means by feminine reveals that this is not so. Instead, two different meanings of femininity emerge. First, Alice perceives herself as feminine in terms of her appearance – when with a big, strong man she feels "the picture of a woman." Secondly, she interprets her feminine behavior (submissiveness, dependence) as a kind of play-acting – "playing feminine" – conscious that deliberately engaging in this behavior enables her to manipulate men with her "feminine wiles." Anyon (1981) describes this type of behavior as another kind of public accommodation/private resistance to the ideology of femininity. Anyon believes that this behavior serves the purpose of gaining protection, achieving power indirectly or portraying a non-threatening image in order to ensure success. Thus, the appropriation of such feminine behavior is used to benefit the woman in some sense, and her knowledge that it involves deception guards against loss of

self-esteem, should she be judged by others. That knowledge of her own deception served to protect Alice in this way is evidenced (in the Case Study) in her discussion of an incident involving a male clerk who refused to speak to her directly. The clerk consistently looked at and spoke to Alice's father even though it was Alice who asked him questions. Rather than feeling powerless in the situation, Alice felt strong and smug, knowing that she had "a secret" about her knowledge and abilities that the clerk did not perceive. She pretended to be Other, knowing she was really a Subject. Outwardly she remained sweet and submissive; inwardly she rejected the man and judged him to be her inferior. Finally, the point needs to be made that whereas the stereotype of women teaches that women are *naturally* manipulative, only one in 13 women in this study (Alice) described herself as such. Further, it is clear that Alice perceived her manipulative behavior as acting – a conscious means of influencing others and forwarding her own aims.

Finding Fulfillment in Nurturing Children

Another dimension of experience that some participants found satisfying involved their children. Of the eight women interviewed who had children, all stated that they valued their children. Two women (Denise and Beret) felt "luckier" than men to have the opportunity to be close to their children, and to have a responsibility that was satisfying to them personally and resulted in a sense of achievement. Both women were in their 60s and therefore had worked as mothers in a time when it was strongly believed that nurturing children was *natural* for women. (This they believed in spite of their common experience that their fathers were "softer" and "more gentle" than their mothers.) Further, both women had full-time careers for most of their lives and therefore were not restricted to their homes and to the work of child-care. A third woman (Christine) also enjoyed nurturing her children, although this had not always been the case. She, too, works full-time outside her home. Being a single parent, she is sometimes in conflict and exhausted as a result of being the only adult to provide for all of her children's and her own needs. Aside from these difficulties, however, Christine, like Denise and Beret, values the act of nurturing her children, feels satisfied in this work and perceives it to be an achievement. Clearly, these three women experienced

themselves as Subject in the role of mother.

Of the remaining five women who have children, nurturing their children has been conflicting, frustrating, depressing, and uncomfortable as was earlier discussed. Thus, whereas all eight women with children valued their children highly, less than half actually found the act of nurturing them satisfying. The social expectations that women *naturally* feel nurturing toward their children, that this activity alone is enough to satisfy them and that the responsibility for nurturing children *properly* falls to the mother alone, appear to undermine women's relationships to their children and their ability to be nurturing. Motherhood, as it has been defined and institutionalized in our society, actually works against the nurturing capacity that women (and men) might have, were they given the support they need, the credit they deserve and the choice to not limit their activities strictly to nurturing children. In other words, the definition of mothers as Other may interfere with the women's experiencing of themselves as Subject in the role of mother. This finding and interpretation is supported by Bernard's (1974) finding that women today are daring to state that while they love their children, they hate the institution of motherhood. Bernard found that women object to being assigned sole responsibility for their children, to having child care conceived of as their only major activity, to the isolation they experience in the role of mother, and to the romanticized notions of what nurturing children involves. She concludes that "the way we institutionalize motherhood is bad for women" (p. 14). Further, she believes that when motherhood is stressful rather than fulfilling and when women feel frustrated, conflicted and depressed, children also suffer. From this understanding has grown a new area of investigation in feminist psychology which is examining the effects on children, women and men and on society generally, of expecting women alone to be the nurturing element in society (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1976; Rich, 1976).

Being Warm, Caring, Sensitive, Understanding and Helpful

Another positive experience of being a woman was having the ability to be warm, caring, sensitive, understanding and/or helpful human beings. Six of the participants described themselves thus. Generally, being this kind of person was

important to these six women, who perceived their behavior as a means by which connections could be made to others and something worthwhile achieved. In this sense, they experienced themselves as Subject. It is important to note that being warm, sensitive, etc. did not necessarily correlate with being nurturing toward children. One woman who has children but who does not feel a deep love for them values that she can be understanding and helpful to others. Two women who do not have children (one out of choice) value that they can be understanding and caring to others. Thus, it appears that being nurturing toward children does not necessarily go hand-in-hand with being warm and sensitive to others. Further, although the stereotype of women is that they are *naturally* nurturing, sensitive, warm, caring, understanding and helpful to everyone (Fransella & Frost, 1977), in this study less than half of the women described themselves, in these terms. Perhaps given the choice to say what they value about themselves rather than to choose from a list of values, women are freed from having to say they are warm and helpful. As is the case with nurturing children, there appears to be a gap between ideology and reality.

A point needs to be made here about the interpretations of the six women who experienced themselves as warm, caring, etc. One woman (Denise) believed that she enjoyed being understanding and helpful to others *because* she was a woman; three women (Beret, Christine, Elizabeth) believed that being a woman in this society *allowed* them to have this experience; and two women (Theresa, Madelaine) attributed this experience to their individual personalities or interests. Anyon's (1981) theory of accommodation and resistance may be helpful only in so far as it explains superficially the different psychological experience of women who see themselves as warm and caring, and those who do not. However, this does not help us to understand the differences in the beliefs of the six women who do experience themselves as warm, caring, etc. Denise's perception of herself as helpful is accompanied by her assumption that because the stereotype of women as understanding and helpful *fits* her, these behaviors are *natural* to women generally. In her case, ideology takes precedence over reality. On the other hand, Beret, Christine and Elizabeth are conscious that their own personalities

are congruent with social expectations placed on women. They perceive themselves as lucky to have the freedom to express this part of themselves, believing that men are restricted in this sense not because of innate differences but because of social expectations. Because Theresa and Madelaine attributed their experience of being warm, caring, etc. to their individual selves, it is impossible to ascertain whether or not they are conscious of social expectations placed on women in this respect.

Finding Satisfaction in Achieving Relationships

All of the participants found satisfaction in achieving relationships – in connecting or bonding to others.

1. Marriage or Cohabiting

Five women (Denise, Theresa, Mary, Madelaine, Marcela) valued the intimate connections they had with current husbands or cohabitants and Denise valued a previous marriage also. These six relationships were valued because the women experienced satisfaction in working toward common goals with a partner and in finding in their partner a good friend, companion or person to be respected. For example, Theresa spoke of feeling an equal partner with her husband and Marcela spoke of valuing the particular intimacy she experienced with her lover. In these relationships, then, the women seem to have experienced themselves as Subject. However, it is important, once again, to recognize that more than half of the marriages (three out of six current and six out of seven previous) were experienced as frustrating, unsatisfying or destructive. This finding has already been discussed under the section on Negative Meanings. That the reality of marriage often does not meet the dream is widely documented (Bernard, 1973a; Komarovsky, 1967; Rubin, 1976). Why marriage is often experienced as satisfying or frustrating and how this relates to women's status as Other has been thoroughly investigated by Bernard (1972) who concludes that marriage is more destructive for women, despite their claims to happiness, judging by the poorer mental and emotional health of married women compared to married men. The phrase, "despite their claims to happiness" requires that the

relationships and mental health of women who value their husbands or lover be examined more closely. It has already been established that Mary and Madelaine suffered from depression, lack of confidence, a sense of powerlessness and/or low self-esteem. It has been established, too, that Mary and Madelaine at various times have resented their subordinate status in the role of wife and the sacrifices they were *expected* to make in this role. It seems likely, then, that whereas a husband can be respected or appreciated and the connection to him valued, that the *institution* of marriage (like the institution of motherhood) can undermine the capacity of the woman to function as a healthy individual.

2. Family of Origin

Families of origin remained a meaningful connection for 10 of the 13 women interviewed. The family member to whom a woman felt the strongest connection differed, as did the meaning of the connection. Family might mean a source of on-going, mutual support and love (Alice), on-going conflict or discomfort (Sally), a connection to the past (Jean), or a connection to an idea of family (Marcela). Further, the meanings of family change over time, as with all else. More will be said about families in the section dealing with Context, however.

3. Friendships

Friendships were highly valued by 12 of the 13 women interviewed. They were varyingly perceived as a substitute for family who lived far away or had died (Jean, Beret) or as more than family - people with whom one could speak openly, and experience mutual closeness, acceptance, support and growth (Theresa, Elizabeth, Christine). In other words, friendships were valued because they were relationships in which the women experienced themselves as Subject. Commenting on the difference between family and friends, Bernikow (1980) makes the same point.

> To move from family to friends is like throwing the window open on the first day of spring. The word 'bond' comes to take on a different meaning, one that emphasizes its positive side, the connectedness, and submerges the negative, the bondage. Choice breezes in. One can take and leave a friend with more ease than one can embrace...(family). At the same time, the anchor lifts, for

> family is at the same time security, rootedness, belonging, and one begins to move in a world of friends with greater risk, less assurance (pp. 112-113).

Connections to others apart from conjugal and original families have not generally been regarded as important in psychological or counselling literature (Miller, 1976; Robson & Edwards, 1980). Miller (1976) suggests that this is so because the model for human development is male and stresses the so-called masculine attributes of independence and self-enhancement. She hypothesizes that whereas women's cultivated need for affiliation has been devalued, in actuality men also have this need but have learned to treat it with disdain - as feminine and therefore not to be valued. That humanistic therapy is teaching men to accept their need for affiliation is not enough, however, according to Miller. Rather, she believes, it is important to recognize that society needs to be reorganized such that men as well as women learn to value their affiliations, and that women learn they can *choose* affiliations which are supportive and will further their growth as self-determining individuals. As is the case with other issues relating to women, feminists have been first to recognize the importance of friendships generally, and women's friendships with women, particularly. That the area of relationships and friendships deserves in-depth study in psychology, is attested to by the fact that an American journal, Psychology of Women Quarterly, devoted one entire volume (5-3,1981) to the topic. Safilios-Rothschild (1981), editor of this volumne, attributes "the explosion of relationships and the focus on intimacy" in the 1970s to women's increasing liberation, a growing "single" population, a questioning of the validity of achievement in the "rat-race," and a challenging of systemic barriers to success.

In this study, seven women spoke specifically of friendships with other women, valued because of the mutual sharing and understanding experienced. Four of these women reported that their friendships with women had changed as a direct result of the Women's Movement, and three saw the change in their friendships with women as relating to the changes in their own life circumstances (i.e., going out to work, meeting women like

themselves, etc.). The feminist concept of sisterhood – the bond between women that comes from a shared understanding of their experiences of their oppression as women – has grown out of women's friendships such as the ones described in this study. In feminist therapy, women's relationships with women are considered as important as their relationships with men (Robson & Edwards, 1980; Sturdivant, 1980). That women's friendships with women has therapeutic value was demonstrated in a recent study by Davidson and Packard (1981). Specifically, they found that same-sex friendships contributed to the "personal growth, support or change of women" (p. 508). Further discussion about women's friendships with women will follow in the final section of this chapter.

Finding Satisfaction in Work Outside the Home

Eleven of the 13 women interviewed found satisfaction in paid work outside the home. Specifically, work was experienced as satisfying because it gave a sense of independence or control (for six women), it resulted in a feeling of being capable (for seven women), it represented a challenge (for five women), and it resulted in a feeling of being helpful or appreciated (for seven women). These results suggest that paid work has psychological as well as financial benefits for women, as for men – they no longer see themselves as subordinate, and rather than experiencing themselves as Other, experience themselves as Subject. This finding supports the work of Luxton (1981) who maintains that married women, aside from working for financial gain, also work because from paid work they derive a sense of independence, satisfaction, pride and sociability. That the benefits to married women of paid work include mental health is evidenced by Unger (1979), who reports that wives who work outside of the home are happier than those who do not.

Bardwick (1979) relates a change in attitude toward women working in the last decade to a general change in attitude toward work itself, as well as toward women. Paid work is perceived, more than any other commitment, she explains, as providing a means to self-fulfillment; and women are actively seeking paid work in order to develop their potential as well as to pay their bills. Working outside of

the home is more ego-affirming than working as a full-time wife and mother, Bernard (1974) maintains, because the roles of wife and mother are narrow and leave little room for individualism. Still, according to Bernard, married women with children often experience much conflict between the traditional definition of themselves as wife and mother and their potential definition as an individual, developed through paid work. Stress may be experienced, too, in the daily reality of meeting the demands of a job and a family. This conflict and stress was demonstrated most clearly in the case of Mary, who was painfully torn between caring for her children and developing a career of her own, and had been exhausted from having attempted both simultaneously. In a state of mild depression as a result of this and other conflicts, Mary did not report finding either paid work or child-care satisfying, either when she was working for pay or since she had quit. Madelaine, too, experienced conflict, but on an ideological level rather than in reality: she imagined there would be conflict with her husband if she went out to work. However, her anticipated conflict and lack of confidence was enough to inhibit her from seeking work outside of her home.

With regard to the 11 women who were working, valued their work and experienced little or no conflict about working, three had no children and no partners (Jean, Alice, Elizabeth), two had no children and were living with partners who considered them equal (Theresa, Marcela), two were retired but had once been working mothers due to circumstances beyond their control (Beret, Denise), two were single parents who had no choice but to work (Sally, Christine), one had grown children and was working to establish an independent life since her divorce (Heidi), and one had been directed to go out to work by her doctor after having become depressed from staying at home with her children (Joan). In other words, the women who experienced little or no conflict about working either did not have to deal with the restrictions of wife and/or mother roles, had a good reason for working which outweighed the restrictions imposed by the wife and mother roles (i.e., they were single parents, divorced or responding to community needs), or they were professionally and personally supported in their choice of work.

One more point needs to be made concerning the issue of paid work. Feminist theorists, who have professional status in their chosen "careers," often make an elitest judgment that women who work at "jobs" demanding little pay, are victimized. It is true that low wages for women are discriminatory and that women are victimized in this sense. However, the "job" which may seem meaningless, trivial or boring to a "career woman" (even a feminist career woman) may be experienced by the woman who holds the job as satisfying and challenging, and as giving her a sense of independence or control. Fransella and Frost (1977) believe that we know very little about what particular jobs mean to women. The results of this study, however, demonstrate that a job need not have the status of a professional career in order to provide satisfaction or a sense of independence. Both Sally, who was a paid homemaker, and Heidi, who was a house cleaner, enjoyed their work for the reasons stated above. Denise took pride and found satisfaction in her jobs as a cashier and later as a secretary. Elizabeth, who was once a nurse, now enjoys the freedom and lack of stress that being a secretary offers her. This finding directly challenges the theory of deBeauvoir (and the beliefs of many feminist sociologists, as well) that because a woman's job has the status of Other, that she experiences herself as Other. The results of this study demonstrate instead that all of the women who worked for pay experienced themselves as Subject. Only the two woman who experienced conflict between their roles as wife and mother and their desire for a paid job, and therefore *chose* to stay home, experienced themselves as Object in relation to their work.

Finding Meaning in the Ideals and Goals of the Women's Movement

Twelve of the 13 participants found meaning in the ideals or valued the goals of The Women's Movement. They felt that the Women's Movement had directly affected their personal lives by providing them with an analysis which fit their experience (seven), by teaching them to value their women friends (four) or legitimizing their desires and needs (three). The Women's Movement was also perceived as a catalyst for divorce in three unsatisfactory marriages, and responsible for legal change which drastically affected one woman's life. Generally, the Women's Movement was perceived as motivating women to make

choices regarding relationships, activities and work, and as a reminder that women deserve to have equal rights and to be valued equally. Thus, the large majority of women in this study related positively to the ideology of the Women's Movement, having personally benefited from it and being appreciative of the social, economic, legal changes which have resulted from it. These results may be surprising to traditional thinkers who perceive the Women's Movement to be passe or who believe that feminist ideology has affected only a small minority of women. Further discussion about the women's reaction to feminist and other ideologies will follow in the final section of this chapter.

C. Women's Experience in Context

Factors affecting the negative and positive meanings women give to their experience as women is understood more completely from an analysis of the context of women's experience.

Individual Factors and Meaning

Health

Good health was appreciated by two women, both in their 60s; and poor health contributed to a feeling of powerlessness in two women, both in their 30s. Expectations regarding health for a particular age group undoubtedly affected these women's attitudes toward their own state of health. The issue of health might well be taken as an issue related to individual physiology and to age, given that health care in Canada has been socialized to some degree. This is not true, however, according to Simkin (1979), an Alberta physician who maintains, "Women do not get equal and/or adequate health care" (p. 63). Simkin has examined barriers to women's equality in society and how this effects their health care. She relates the general devaluing of women to the fact that large amounts of money are poured into research on men's diseases (cardiovascular diseases, for example) while much less money is made available for women's diseases. In her own research of 498 female Rheumatoid Arthritis patients she demonstrated that 87% of the patients had gone undiagnosed for 12 years or more (during which time they had presented various symptoms to their doctors) and most of these women

were told by their doctors that they were neurotic. The results verified Simkin's hypothesis that doctors don't listen to women's complaints. She concludes,

> Only when physicians descend to the level of mere human beings, and women are elevated to that same level, can women receive comprehensive health care (p. 70.)

The health care system has also been criticized by feminists for not meeting the needs of women. Penfold (1980) warns that the current stress on health and fitness promotion is seductive but is inadequate because, like the more traditional health care system, it is accessible only to the healthiest and wealthiest. While middle-class women may benefit from these programs, poor, working-class women do not. Ehrenreich (1980) believes that the medical system is not a health care system at all - that it caters to disease rather than health, reinforcing and supporting those industries in society which are disease producing but which benefit powerful men in charge of national and multi-national corporations. Thus, literature which examines the context of women's experience in regards to health and illness makes us aware that health is not just a personal matter, it is also political. It is possible, then, that a woman's experience of poor health may relate to the fact that she has the social status of Other.

Results of this study showed that four participants currently experience severe pre-menstrual and/or menstrual distress (or, in the case of Christine, who has had a hysterectomy, cyclical fatigue and emotional swings). Further, it was shown that social meanings given to women's physiological experiences (i.e., attitudes of physicians encountered directly or indirectly) affects the meaning women give to their distress. Three of the four women in this study reported that the knowledge that their emotional cycling was related to their menstrual cycle and was physiologically or hormonally based was important in helping them to understand that their discomfort was not a neurotic symptom and that it was temporary. In other words, they better coped with their discomfort, knowing its origin. The one woman who failed to associate her pre-menstrual symptoms with physiological changes perceived herself to be weak and neurotic at these times. That accurate information about women's bodies has been largely unavailable, and that the medical profession made judgments about women's experiences which

simply reinforced stereotyped myths about "the nature of woman," has been established in the literature (Daly, 1978; Ehrenreich & English, 1978; O'Brien, 1979; Rothman, 1979; Simkin, 1979). Simkin (1979) writes, "Women have laboured under such misconceptions and untruths (about the nature of their female bodies, as taught by men) for many hundreds of years" (p. 63). The fact that women continue to be subject to unnecessary hysterectomies and then treated as neurotic if they complain of emotional side-effects also reflects a general disinterest in women's problems and a lack of understanding of their experience, according to these experts. Similarly, the lack of provision of safe birth control methods is seen to reflect the low priority given to problems affecting women in medical research. O'Brien (1979) believes that women's reproductive capability has been given little value historically because it is not in the realm of the rational. Today, with developing technology, reproduction is still viewed by patriarchal society as apart from men and as something to be controlled, she explains. Recent research by anthropologists supports the notion that reproductivity separates women and men and relegates women to a baser and, therefore, less valued position (Shirley Ardener, 1975a; Ortner, 1973).

It is also established in the literature that historically women have been blamed for their physiological difficulties (Ehrenreich & English, 1978). It is no wonder, then, that some women (like Marcela) continue to believe they are to blame when they experience dismenorrhea, and judge themselves to be neurotic. That knowledge of female physiology and an understanding of the physiological basis of emotional and physical changes can be helpful to women has been demonstrated in three cases in this study. In a discussion of attribution theory and the menstrual cycle, Unger (1979) reviews research which has investigated the consequences of women's attributing menstrual distress to their physiology. She explains,

> It has been suggested that women who have a salient and credible attribution for their physiological state may be more capable of avoiding the effects of that state than those who cannot find such a reason for their performance. Predictability may benefit performance either by directly reducing perceived stress or by making individuals work harder in order to overcome an expected decrement in performance (pp. 240-241).

This finding lends support, Unger believes, to the research which demonstrates no

relationship between menstruation and actual performance – research which challenges the myth that women who are menstruating can't function effectively. Research such as this is progressive in that it reinforces the concept of women as Subject, because it serves the purpose of demystifying "woman," who has been defined as Other than "man."

The demystifying of female physiology would also appear to have positive effects for women at puberty. Four women (Joan, Mary, Christine, Sally) reported that the onset of menstruation was a more or less difficult time for them, largely because they lacked information about their developing bodies and their sexuality. One woman (Marcela) reported that she couldn't remember when she began menstruating because her adolescence was generally so upsetting to her that she had "blocked it all out." Two women (Theresa and Denise) reported that being prepared for menstruation and told about female sexuality at puberty was helpful to them. In all cases it was the attitudes of the mothers toward their daughters' developing sexuality, the timing and completeness of the information given, and the general degree of openess and communication between mother and daughter that determined whether or not the daughter understood and felt good about her changing body. Peer attitudes and degree of discomfort while menstruating also affected how some of the women experienced themselves at this time. The responsibility for daughters learning about their bodies at puberty seems to fall to mothers, and it would be easy to find fault with mothers who do not prepare their daughters for menstruation or who pass on negative attitudes about menstruation and sex. However, given the historical attitudes of the medical community to women's bodies generally and to girls entering puberty in particular (Mitchinson, 1978), it can be understood that mothers are sometimes carriers of myths, fears and embarassment about female sexuality. In other words, mothers sometimes simply echo the attitudes of society generally – attitudes that they themselves have encountered. Caplan (1981) describes various conflicts between mothers and daughters which arise when the daughter enters puberty – conflicts arising from the mother's fears about her daughter's sexual vulnerability and from her fears of being judged a bad mother if her daughter does not conform to the standards

expected of "nice girls." Sally's conflict with her mother at puberty most vividly demonstrates this phenomenon.

Temperament

The fact that six women reported that their individual temperaments have been an important factor that affected their lives consistently, suggests that certain temperaments may affect the meaning women give to their experiences. For example, being shy and withdrawn in a society which encourages women to be passive and submissive and assigns them the status of Other would have different consequences than would be expected for a tomboy who insists on being active and taking the initiative or for a rebellious personality who is determined to stand up for justice. There are significant differences in the meanings given to being women, in fact, for Mary and Jean (who are shy and withdrawn and have difficulty initiating change) and for Joan, Beret and Theresa (who are tomboys and see themselves as active, determined and/or rebellious). Mary and Jean perceive themselves as largely powerless; Joan, Beret and Theresa perceive themselves as largely powerful. This is not to say that temperament is seen to be a causal factor in behavior. Rather, temperament might be considered one of a number of factors that interact with social expectations, status, etc. to produce a particular effect. Further, it may be that given the social expectations for women in our culture, particular temperaments (such as being shy, timid and withdrawn) may be more vulnerable, and other temperaments (such as energetic, active, determined and rebellious) may be more resistant to pressures to conform to the ideological image of the submissive, subordinate woman. This interpretation is supported by results of a study by Brehony and Geller (1981) who determined that androgynous (active, independent) women perceived themselves as having more internal control and were likely to conform less to social expectations than were stereotypic (passive, dependent) women. It is understood, of course, that temperaments do not exist in isolation and that other factors would also play a part. The point is merely that temperament can be a factor, for some women, in how they react to or cope with their status as Other. Based on her study of personality and situational variables in the prediction of women's life patterns, Stewart (1980) concludes that whereas

situational variables set broad limits on behavior, personality variables predict choice within those limits.

Physical Appearance

Body size and appearance had a major negative effect on the meaning of the experiences of three women (Jean, Beret, and Mary) and a minor negative effect on two women (Joan and Alice). The three women most severely affected were big, fat, or not like their peers in appearance. However, it was not their body size or appearance per se that resulted in the trauma these women experienced. Rather, it was the judgment by others and by themselves that was problematic – the judgment that they were different from the norm or the ideal, and therefore not acceptable. The devastating effect on women of being judged according to an ideal standard of beauty was documented by early writers of the current feminist movement (Embree, 1970; Greer, 1970; Nunes & White, 1973). How the feelings of being unacceptable have pervaded the lives of Jean, Beret and Mary, and how these feelings led to a crippling self–rejection in Jean and an intense self–consciousness in Beret and Mary, has been demonstrated. Comparing themselves to an ideal image of femininity and judging themselves to be inadequate was destructive to their sense of selves. They were Other in that their acceptance of themselves was determined by a standard not of their own making. Further, in failing to measure up to the ideal image of femininity they became a psychological Other in their own eyes. Thus they are Other in two senses: Other in relation to the male population which has formal status and power, and Other in relation to the ideal image of femininity. That the fear and guilt of not achieving a particular body image (and particular feminine behaviors) can be extremely problematic for women has been demonstrated by feminist therapists and reachers who work with women who eat compulsively (Boskind–Lodahl, 1979; LeShan, 1981; Orbach, 1978, 1982; Palmer, 1982). Therapists of women who are overweight, anorexic, or bulimic are helping women to examine how they try to satisfy emotional needs with food and to understand how certain stresses of being female in our culture relate to body image (Leshan, 1981; Orbach, 1978, 1982). The primary goal of such therapy is to assist women to experience themselves as Subject. First they are made conscious

of the messages they received which defined them as Other (both physically and behaviorally) and the particular ways in which they experience themselves as Other. Second, they are taught to meet their emotional needs and express their feelings directly, which results in their learning how to behave and experience themselves as Subject.

Family Relationships and Meaning

The family of origin has long been understood to have tremendous impact on the psychological development and mental health of its members. Investigation of women's relationships to their parents originated with Freud's analysis of the electra complex (criticized above), a process by which a girl realizes she cannot be like her father (because she has no penis) and so adjusts to being like her mother (who also has no penis). A woman who resents her subordinate status is, according to Freudians, suffering from penis envy (Hall & Lindzey, 1978; Juliet Mitchell, 1975). Horney rejected Freud's concept of penis envy as the determining factor in the psychology of women, focusing instead on the social and cultural realities of women's lives which she believes account for their resentments, insecurities, and neurotic needs. (Hall & Lindzey, 1978; Horney, 1967). So strong was Freud's influence that feminist researchers continue to debate his theories and reinterpret his analyses (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1976; Lerman, 1980; Juliet Mitchell, 1975; Ramas, 1980). Horney's writings, too, continue to be reexamined in the hope of clarifying our understanding of women's psychology (Garrison, 1981; Juliet Mitchell, 1975). At the same time, feminist researchers have begun an exploration of women's relationships to their families, especially to their mothers (Caplan, 1980, 1981; Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1976; Flax, 1978; Glastonbury, 1979; Hammer, 1976; Rich, 1976). Fireweed, a feminist quarterly, has devoted one entire issue (12,1982) to exploring "Blood Relations," and Hirsch has written a review essay on the topic, "Mothers and Daughters" in Signs (1981). Women's relationships to their fathers and other relatives, as well as the effect of particular family dynamics on women, has not been investigated (except for incest cases). Results of this study as regards the effect of different family members and family dynamics on women's experience as women are important in furthering our understanding of women's psychological experience.

Relationships to Mothers

The majority of participants (9/13) had conflicting relationships with their mothers, although the nature of the conflicts experienced by these women were very different, as was the degree of positive or negative feeling. A common feature of all of these conflicting mother/daughter relationships, however, was that they existed within a patriarchal system which had somehow "left its mark" on the mother and/or daughter – a mark which interfered with their relationship. That conflict with mothers arose for five women when they entered puberty has already been discussed. Beret and Denise, though respecting their mothers' intelligence, resourcefulness, strength and determination, both felt rejected by their mothers in another way – Beret because she was a tomboy, and was big, tall and active, unlike her feminine sister; and Denise because she was a daughter and her mother favored the sons. Beret's mother had accepted the dominant male culture's ideal of feminine looking and acting women, and Denise's mother had accepted the dominant male culture's higher valuation of males. Both women felt judged by their mothers to be Other: Denise was Other in that she received less attention from her mother than did her brothers, and Beret was Other in that she received less attention from her mother than did her more feminine sister. Caplan (1981), in her book, Barriers Between Women, describes the kind of mother/daughter conflict experienced by Denise. She does not discuss the kind of conflict experienced by Beret, however. Fortunately for Denise and Beret, they also admired their mothers' strengths and abilities, and benefited from their direct teaching, modelling and encouragement to achieve in the world outside the home. This teaching seems to have served as a buffer against society's expectations that they be submissive and know their *proper place*. Both women experience themselves as capable and determined and have resisted the idea that they should be subordinate. Beret, however, accommodated to her mother's and society's judgment that she was unacceptable because she did not look feminine, and continues to judge herself as such today. In this sense she experiences herself as Other.

Sally's conflict with her mother centres around her resentment of her mother's current interference and dependence and past behavior on the one hand,

and her desire for her mother's love and support on the other. Sally's expectations that her mother be always nurturing and available to her in spite of circumstances which made that impossible reflects the dominant attitude that mothers *should* always put their children first and are to blame when they can't. Sally's mother, meanwhile, suffers severe anxiety when her husband leaves her alone to work on his trapline, having learned so well what society teaches women, which is to be dependent on others.for their satisfaction and to gain a sense of identity through their husband and children. Sally's conflict, then, is that she desires a mutually close and supportive relationship with her mother, but at the same time resents that her mother has not always been nurturing and that she has become overly dependent. Caplan (1980, 1981) describes both the phenomenon of daughters resenting that their mothers are not always nurturing the way they're *supposed to be*, and the phenomenon of mothers becoming dependent on their daughters for nurturing. Both situations act as barriers between women, according to Caplan, but these barriers arise from the social definition of women as mothers, not from the individuals. She states:

> Since women are expected to be nurturant, daughters (as well as sons) are angrier and more disappointed when they ask their mothers for help and support and it is not forthcoming, than when this happens with their fathers (1980, p. 8).

Madelaine and Elizabeth suffered a similar conflict in their relationships with their mothers – they didn't get the love and attention they desired because their mothers were physically and emotionally exhausted from caring for many children and coping with additional problems. These mothers were victims of social norms which expected women to make a career of having and raising children. Further, in the cases of Madelaine's and Elizabeth's mothers, at least, the Catholic church forbade them to use birth control and taught them that female suffering was inevitable. Thus, being "good women" resulted in their being continually pregnant. The result for Madelaine (middle child in a family of 13 children) was that there was no time for her and she felt neglected. Elizabeth (eldest in a family of eight children) was neglected, too, but in addition was expected to take resonsibility for the mother role. In spite of this, both women respect their mothers in some sense, Elizabeth because her mother encouraged her to achieve academically, and

Madelaine because she understands the hardships her mother endured and perceives her as a connection to life itself. Jean's conflict with her mother, like that of Madelaine's and Elizabeth's, is that the love and affection she desired was not forthcoming. Her mother, too, was exhausted from eight pregnancies (two of which resulted in miscarriages) and from raising children. In addition she was required to care for an ill husband, manage the farm, and work outside the home, all of which caused much anxiety. Further, Jean felt inadequate compared to her mother, who seemed to her to be so strong, so capable, so all-knowing. She could never be like her mother, she reasoned, so she withdrew from her, feeling insecure, inadequate, and undernourished. Again, this mother was respected, but a multitude of problems and lack of time and energy prevented the formation of a close bond of love. Glastonbury (1979) explained children's perceptions of their poor, overworked and exhausted mothers as such: she is a life force, not a character; she is respected, but not loved.

The conflict Mary feels with her mother seems to arise from a lack of communication about things important to Mary. According to Mary this probably relates to the mother's own stress and unhappiness in her role as a good wife who gave up her own career to marry and have children and live with a husband who was authoritative and oppressive. Prevented in her own life from fulfilling her dreams, Mary's mother apparently looked to Mary to fulfill them for her. Mary tried to oblige but in the process made choices that did not suit her. (Her decision to become a teacher was based on her mother's goal, not her own.) She did appreciate her mother's support, however, in the face of her father's criticisms and in relation to her going to college.

Alice's conflict with her mother was somewhat similar to Mary's in that Alice's mother wanted for her what she did not achieve for herself. However, Alice perceived in her mother conflicting messages as to what Alice should do with her life – her mother told her to be independent and "do things" with her life, but inadvertently taught her to hide her strengths, pretend to be weak and gain power by manipulation. These messages were indicative of the conflict that Alice's mother experienced in relation to her social definition. She desired that her

daughter be the Subject of her life, but could not show her how to do that, for she only knew how to be Subject in private. Publically, she pretended to be Other to accommodate to her husband's and society's expectations. Using Anyon's (1981) theory, then, Alice learned from her mother the public/private discrepancy in accommodation and resistance to the feminine stereotype. She is thankful, however, that her mother desired for her more than the status of Other.

Marcela, too, appreciates that her mother desires for her the status of Subject. Specifically, she appreciates the support she feels from her mother around her career ambitions. Further, she respects her mother's goals and achievements. On the negative side, however, she directly experienced her mother as hostile, punitive and controlling during her puberty. She relates her mother's behavior to her own conflict and frustration, first with a restrictive father and later with a chauvinistic husband who was threatened by her achievements, who drank to soothe his soul and who was loving and attentive to his daughter instead of to her. Caplan (1981) has described mother–daughter conflicts which revolve around competition for the husband's/father's attention, or which involve the mother restricting the daughter's social life at adolescence. Both of these kinds of conflicts appear to have been elements of Marcela's conflict with her mother. In addition, Marcela resents the fact that her mother's anger and frustration (which arose from her struggle to have a business career in a man's world) was vented on her and that she was expected to take over household responsibilities. The common feature of the variety of conflicts experienced by Marcela in relation to her mother is that social expectations and the lower valuation of women interfered with the development of a satisfying relationship. Thus it was with all nine cases in which the daughters experienced their relationships with their mothers as conflicting. The daughters bore the mark of their mothers' difficulties with their social definition or gender role, and/or the mothers were judged by their daughters to be less than ideal because they failed to meet society's standards. The common status of mothers and daughters as Other, interfered with the relationships between them.

Two participants, Joan and Christine, who experienced their relationships to their mothers as primarily negative, also bore the consequences of their mothers, difficulties. This time, however, there were no perceived redeeming aspects to the relationships. For Joan there was little connection with her mother, initially because she did not live with her and learned not to depend on her for her emotional needs, and later because they did not share similar interests and desires. Joan disassociated herself from her mother because she did not want to be what she judged her mother to be (Other in relation to men who were Subject) and because her mother judged her to be different from the feminine ideal (Other). Joan decided that she would rather be Subject, like men. Caplan (1980) describes the kind of reaction Joan has to her mother – the dynamic of the daughter wanting to be different from her mother whom she judges to have an empty and unsatisfying life. In rejecting the status of Other for herself, the daughter rejects the mother who has accepted this status. Like Joan, Christine perceived that her mother expected her to repeat the pattern of her own life – in this case a life of poverty, drudgery and abuse. In addition, however, Christine was expected to protect her mother and nurture her in a way that Christine, herself, had never been nurtured. Further, she was expected to assume adult responsibility for household tasks and caring for her younger siblings. Christine's experience was much like Elizabeth's except that Christine was not encouraged to achieve at school. Caplan (1981) writes that in families in which incest occurs, one frequently finds a mother–daughter role reversal, where the mother is unable to nurture and turns to her daughter for nurturing. These daughters are also expected to take responsibility for household tasks and for their siblings. The findings of Herman and Hirschman (1977) support this picture. Further, they found that daughters are frequently more angry toward their mothers than toward their fathers, blaming their mothers for failing to protect them and siding with their more powerful fathers against their weak and inadequate mothers. This, indeed, was the case for both Elizabeth and Christine. (This phenomenon was also noted in Sally's relationships with her parents, though she was not an incest victim.) However, contrary to the commonly held notion that daughters become incest victims

because their mothers are sexually frigid and consciously or unconsciously encourage the incest, Caplan (1981) writes that mothers are often so intensely insecure and fearful themselves that they are totally submerged in their own inner struggles. The mother's status and psychological experience as Other, if extreme enough, can result in her being unable to offer her daughter anything but the expectation that she, too, be Other. Herman and Hirschman (1977) believe that in the final stages of therapy with incest victims, after anger toward the mother has been fully expressed, consciousness-raising as to women's status as Other in the family and community will help women to express their repressed anger toward their fathers. Leidig's (1980) and my own work with incest victims verifies that this is the usual process in therapy.

In sharp contrast, two participants (Theresa and Heidi) experienced their relationships with their mothers as primarily positive. Theresa values above all that her mother taught her to respect herself as a woman, and simultaneously acted on her belief that women were equal to men by standing up to her chauvinistic husband and thereby modelling her own strength of character. Theresa learned from her mother, by word and deed, that women were not Other and that they should fight those who assume they are. Heidi respects that her mother was both hard-working and loving in spite of being ill and believes that her fine upbringing has given her the strength to cope with her own marriage problems. It appears that in spite of difficult circumstances both of these mothers were respected and loved because they could demonstrate their love to their daughters, taught their daughters to respect themselves, and themselves led their lives in a way their daughters could respect.

Baker's (1975) research on women's role models is helpful in our understanding of these results. She found that women experienced two kinds of role models, usually females and often their mothers. Positive models encouraged the women, and the women in turn admired and attempted to emulate them. Negative models were women perceived to be in an unfavorable position, whose mistakes should be avoided. Women who had a positive model could perceive how to be successful, whereas women who had a negative model could only see

what they wanted to avoid. They had the difficult job of having to find their own way to success and having to invent their own coping mechanisms. According to Baker (1975), overcoming the handicap of having a negative role model requires a great deal of emotional energy and these women are likely to feel atypical or deviant. This suggests that women who have a positive role model have an easier time than women who do not. Baker concludes:

> There was some indication that this continual family support was essential to counteract other pressures from popular stereotypes, casual acquaintences and the media (p.7).

Relationships With Fathers

As was reported, participants' relationships with fathers formed a very different pattern than with mothers. Whereas conflict to varying degrees typified the large majority of relationships with mothers, relationships with fathers were more varied and no single experience predominated. Four women (Denise, Beret, Heidi and Sally) experienced their relationships with their fathers as primarily positive, because they perceived their fathers to be loving and supportive toward them and worthy of their respect. Four women (Marcela, Jean, Alice and Theresa) experienced their relationships with their fathers as conflicting. In these relationships the father was perceived to be loving or supportive and this was considered positive. The negative aspect of the relationship for Marcela was that her father seemed irresponsible and incapable of acting at times. The conflict arose for Jean because her father's severe illness left her frightened and insecure. Theresa and Alice spoke much less of their fathers than they did of their mothers. Both fathers seem to have assumed a stereotypic masculine role in the family and almost appear to be backdrops against which the daughters learned (differently) from their mothers how to "cope with men." Both woman spoke of their fathers as having had greater impact on them than did their mothers. The negative aspect to these two relationships seems to be the limited definitions these men had of their daughters and their limited aspirations for them. This aspect changed for Alice in later years, however. She describes how, at age 30 when she decided to go into business for herself, her father was very supportive.

Three women (Christine, Elizabeth and Mary) experienced their relationships with their fathers as primarily negative. That Christine's and Elizabeth's experiences as incest victims continued to be extremely damaging to them for years after they left home has already been discussed. Experts write that relationships between incestuous fathers and their daughters are not "glaringly abnormal," but rather are intensifications of the acceptable power structure of a patriarchal family – an abuse of his rightful power (Caplan, 1981; Herman & Hirschman, 1977; MacFarlane, 1978). In Caplan's words, "the father has the power in the household, and the mother and other females attempt to meet his demands" (1981, p.79). The father, himself often an abused or neglected child, is typically emotionally needy and immature. He makes unreasonable demands and expects his wife and especially his daughter (who is even less his equal and therefore less threatening) to meet them. Fearing total rejection (she is often threatened) she complies. Fathers confronted with their behavior are often surprised to learn they have committed a crime, believing that sexual access to their daughters is a parental right (Rush, 1980). Mary's father did not exploit her the way Christine and Elizabeth were exploited. However, she felt oppressed by her father's rigid behavior, values and attitudes, his criticisms and restrictions. She continues today to feel the effects of his former judgments, and to be concerned for her mother's deteriorating mental health and lack of happiness in the marriage. She feels badly about judging him harshly, but finds few redeeming aspects in their relationship. Finally, two participants (Joan and Madelaine) hardly mentioned their fathers at all. When responding to the question, "What do you value in your life?" Joan did not refer to either parent and Madelaine referred only to her mother. Relationships with their fathers (Joan's was a step-father) for these two women appeared to be important only in terms of a deficiency. The fathers' lack of input is not resented the way the mother's lack generally is, however.

Generalizations about the nature of mother/daughter and father/daughter relationships cannot be drawn on the basis of 13 cases. However, it is possible here to describe what appear to be key issues in these relationships, as they are understood from the daughters' points-of-view. The daughters seem to have

judged relationships with both parents as positive if they experienced the parent as loving, as supportive of their interests or goals, and as people to be respected. If one or two of these aspects was missing as a result of either personal or situational variables, the relationship was experienced as conflicting. If all aspects were missing the relationship was experienced as negative. An additional factor in the relationships was the effect on the parent of being female or male in a society which differentiates appropriate behavior for the sexes, which places a higher value on and gives more formal power to males, and which places a lower value on and gives no formal power to females. The differentiation of behaviors and higher valuation of males than females affected the daughters as well. As a result, it appears that some form of conflict, rejection or judgment was structured into the majority (11/13) of mother/daughter relationships. Their mutual social status as Other appears to have been a destructive element in the relationships. Hammer's (1975) work on mother/daughter relationships supports this finding. She outlines the conflicts, ambivalences and double messages that are characteristics of many mother/daughter relationships. She states: "Daughters identify with their mothers, and thus these daughters absorbed Mom's confusion about herself" (p. 29). Father/daughter relationships were affected by the higher valuation of males and differential gender expectations which gave the men formal power and the "choice" of being loving and supportive, dictatorial and oppressive, or withdrawn from family interaction. Having the love and support from and respect for their fathers was a major positive element in the lives of four women. Conversely the two conflicting and three negative relationships with fathers also had a major impact on those womens' lives. There appears to be less blame put on fathers who are judged to be inadequate, however. That the differential expectations on mothers and fathers to be nurturing does affect women's judgments of these relationships is supported by the finding that incest victims often initially blame their mother for not protecting them, more than they blame their fathers (Leidig, 1980). It appears also that immediate harsh circumstances (large families, poverty, illness, etc.) had a greater negative effect on mother/daughter relationships than on father/daughter relationships. Again, the literature supports this interpretation.

Mothers are judged more harshly than are fathers, when circumstances prevent them from being nurturing (Caplan, 1980).

Family Dynamics

Relationships between their parents had an effect on the women, just as did the women's relationships to each parent. Relationships between parents who were mutually loving and respectful had a positive effect on the self-concept of three women (Beret, Heidi and Denise) insofar as they felt themselves to also be loving, respectful and worthy of respect. However, having parents who are mutually loving and respectful is no guarantee that a woman will find the same kind of relationship in her marriage. Heidi, in fact, found herself married to a man who was extremely abusive to her. Nevertheless, she attributes her strength to survive this marriage to her upbringing. Theresa witnessed her mother refusing to be submissive to her father and denouncing his authoritative attitudes. This had a positive effect on Theresa, she thinks, because she finds it a challenge to defend herself. A dominant father/submissive mother relationship had a negative effect on three women. Alice learned to think of herself as weak and needing to play at being feminine with men (the way she saw her mother pretend with her father), Mary has difficulty asserting herself in her marriage and tends to submit to her husband's desires (as did her mother), and Joan feels guilty when she asserts herself in her marriage (her mother preferred a subordinate role, she thinks). Emotional distance between parents had a negative effect on four women (Elizabeth, Christine, Marcela and Madelaine) who have experienced problems with emotional insecurity. The insecurity was established in childhood and has continued to have a negative effect on these women throughout adulthood. That emotional distance between parents is typical in families where incest occurs is established in the literature (Caplan, 1981; Chapman & Gates, 1978; Rush, 1980). The effect on women of emotional distance between parents has not been studied generally, however. The actual separation of Sally's parents when she was a young child was negative in that it resulted in her being fearful of causing another separation if she "caused trouble." Her parents' temporary separations are problematic for her today because of her mother's dependence on her for nurturing and support. While

conclusions about the various types of relationships between parents on daughters cannot be drawn from this study, the results suggest that it is important to look at the effect of parental relationships on daughters (and sons). Little or no research has been done on this topic, however, except in the case of families with severe psychological problems.

Daughters' positions in the family relative to their siblings was also an important element in the lives of some participants. Being the eldest daughter in a large family and therefore being expected to assume responsibility for household duties and child care was traumatic for Elizabeth and Christine. That sexual abuse often goes hand-in-hand with this type of exploitation of daughters was explained above. Herman and Hirschman (1977) also found evidence that eldest daughters are most frequently the victims of father/daughter incest. There is statistical evidence demonstrating that girls who are runaways or who become prostitutes and/or heavy drug users typically come from this kind of sexually and physically exploitive environment (Barry, 1979; MacFarlane, 1978; Rush, 1980). This was not the fate of Elizabeth and Christine, although both women use prescription drugs to control their depression. Being the middle child in a large and poor family was a negative experience for two women. Madelaine and Jean suffered from emotional neglect, they thought, and as a result felt extremely insecure and anxious. Large family size in conjunction with poverty has been demonstrated to have a negative effect on the emotional security of children. Birth order studies have described the middle child as one who "misses" attention and direction in the family. [16] Sex of siblings was seen to be an important factor for two participants: being the only girl with four brothers was negative for Jean, and being the eldest of three sisters was positive for Theresa. However, attending to situational factors gives a much deeper understanding of why this was so. Both Jean and Theresa lived on farms where seasonal work often required that various family members assist the father outside. If the family had boys and girls, boys were expected to help their fathers

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[16]First borns are usually described as high-achieving and responsible children, but the negative results for daughters of being expected to assume adult responsibilities, which results in their exploitation and abuse, is not discussed in literature dealing with the effects of birth order. Also missing in birth order theory is an examination of the interaction of birth order with family size and with situational variables such as poverty, illness, etc.

and achieved a higher status for doing so. If the family had only girls, the girls worked with their fathers and achieved status for doing a "man's job." Thus, circumstances of farm life interacted with sibling composition and gender to give Theresa a positive experience and Jean a negative one. To the author's knowledge, this aspect of family dynamics has yet to be explored in research.

Relationships to Relatives Other than Mother or Father

In this study grandmothers and aunts (and one older female cousin) were seen to have the most intense effect (both positive and negative) and uncles and grandfathers had a lesser effect. Women who experienced extended family members as supportive either in addition to or in place of parental support, seemed to have an advantage over women who were without extended family support or who experienced extended family members as non-supportive. Baker's (1975) research on role models (discussed above) supports this interpretation.

Social Factors and Meaning

Family's Status in the Community

Both financial and social status of their family of origin in the community were seen to have tremendous impact on the majority of the participants. In total, eight women reported that they had either benefited or been disadvantaged by their family's social and/or financial status in the community. [17] Rarely in psychological research is social and financial status investigated for its relevance to psychological experience. Rather, this dimension is "controlled for" – only subjects of the same status are compared – so that psychological dimensions remain "uncontaminated" (Sherif, 1979a). Sociological research, on the other hand, examines socio-economic status, but has traditionally viewed the psychological dimension as simply a reflection of this status and has failed to account for the psyche as an active and reactive force. Further, according to feminist sociologists, women are consistently treated as adjuncts to men (as Other) in stratification theory (Acker, 1973; Daniels, 1975; Eichler, 1980; Lofland, 1975; Oakley, 1974). Some feminist psychologists and sociologists, however, aware of the limitations of

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[17]That five women did not report the effect on them of their family's status does not mean, however, that there was no significant effect; it means only that for some reason they did not discuss it. However, that her family's status undoubtedly had a powerful effect on Sally, for example, can be surmised from details in her case study.

traditional research, are attempting to understand the links between women's social and financial status and their psychological experience.[18] In this study, the results show that social and financial status sometimes goes hand-in-hand in terms of the effect they have on individuals. Beret, for example, felt she had benefited from her family's social and financial status, while Jean felt that she had suffered both from being poor and from being a social "outcast." In these two cases the concept of socio-economic status could be successfully applied. However, this is not the case for all of the women. Denise felt that in spite of being poor, her family had respect because her parents valued education and were thinking, self-educated, responsible people. Heidi's family, too, was poor but her family's social status had nothing to do with this. Rather, it was elevated or reduced, in relation to the government in power. Similarly, Mary's family's social status related to her minority group status which operated independently of their changing financial status. Elizabeth's family did not suffer financially but suffered socially because her father was the town alcoholic. Christine did not mention social status at all, but was very much aware of how being poor affected her. Social status was not mentioned by Alice either, although she was aware that her family's financial security benefited her. For most of the women in this study, then, use of the concept of socio-economic status would be more likely to distort than to elucidate the meaning of the women's experience to them.

Friends

Having close friends who were understanding and supportive or belonging to a group of peers was reported by five women to have been a positive feature of their childhood which affected their attitudes about themselves as women. Not belonging to a group of peers or feeling conflict about their peer group affected three women negatively in their childhoods. Thus, almost two-thirds of the women in this study were significantly affected by the presence, absence or nature of

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[18]Lillian William's (1976) study, Black Women and Self-Image, in which she uses a phenomenological-existential case history approach, is an example. Numerous other studies investigating the experiences of black and other minority status women exist which take social and financial status into account. The need for such studies became apparent when it was understood that concepts which fit the experience of white, middle-class, financially secure women did not make sense when applied to women of different backgrounds.

childhood friendships. Literature in the child development area of psychology has long recognized the effect of peers on children, especially during adolescence (John Mitchell, 1974, 1975; White & Speisman, 1977). There has been some debate about the nature of female peer groups versus male peer groups since Lionel Tiger (1969) put forward his theory of male bonding. The long term effects of female friendships and peer interactions during childhood have yet to be investigated, however. The results of this study suggest that women's friendships, both past and current, warrant investigation.

Social Norms and Generational Cohort

Social norms and values prevalent at a particular point in time in a particular place affected the women's experience and the meaning they gave to this experience. Generally, the participants experienced as significant, expectations regarding education, work, marriage, child care and maternal love. More specifically, the women who were expected to get an education were told to do so because then they could better contribute to society (1920s and 1930s) or because they could achieve independence, gain a higher status, postpone marriage or make a better marriage (1950s and 1960s). Girls who were not able to get an education were expected to work to earn their dowries (1940s, Germany), or to support themselves and/or their families (1950s and 1960s). Over-riding the expectations that they would work or be educated, however, was the expectation that they would sooner or later marry. The two women who have never married (Alice and Jean) still feel pressure to marry (1970s and 1980s) in spite of the fact that they are educated, self-supporting and have achieved successful careers. Further, they feel that they are judged to be failures as women because they are not married. The women who were living single lives (Sally, Christine, Elizabeth) having been divorced or widowed, did not report experiencing the same pressure from others to marry as did the women who had never married. Thus, while expectations around education and work varied, all the women in different times and places received the message that they *should be married*, or that marriage was inevitable. Marriage, they learned, was a *normal* if not an *ideal* state. That the *institution* of marriage caused the majority of women serious problems has

already been discussed, and the structural problems of marriage, as determined in the literature, have been examined. Also evidenced in the literature is the idea that marriage is not considered optional for women (Bem & Bem, 1971; Bernard, 1973a; Fransella & Frost, 1977; Rossi, 1972; Safilios-Rothschild, 1977).

Expectations that women *should* stay home and care for their children (this is ideal) and that they *naturally* feel nurturing toward their children (this is normal) were experienced. Whether or not the expectation resulted in conflict or anxiety for the individual women depended on (a) personality or temperament, (b) past experience and (c) present circumstance. While Beret, Denise and Heidi accepted that it was their *proper place* to stay home with their children and perceived themselves as *naturally* loving children, circumstances required that they work outside of their homes. Therefore, they did not limit their activities to nurturing their children and maintaining their households. Madelaine, Joan and Christine, all of whom had unhappy childhoods initially, tried to meet the expectation that they *should* make a full-time career of mothering. All were frustrated by the limitation this involved. Joan and Christine both became depressed and eventually engaged in work and activities outside their homes. Madelaine eventually "adjusted" to the roles of mother and wife in order to make peace with her husband. She maintains she is content now but there is evidence that she suffers from low self-esteem. Mary is still attempting to "adjust" to the roles of wife and mother and continues to experience conflict, depression and a sense of powerlessness. Worse for her, however, would be the guilt she would suffer if she did not make this sacrifice for her children and family.

The idea that women *naturally* love their children may also suit some women but be problematic for others. This expectation was reinforcing to Beret, Denise and Heidi, who found that loving children came easily to them. However, it was at various times a burden to Madelaine who felt emotionally neglected herself and doesn't feel an intense love toward her children, to Christine who was both emotionally neglected and sexually abused as a child and who played the role of her mother's protector, to Joan who became depressed at home with her children and preferred to be working outside of the home, to Mary who tried to do

free-lance work while caring for her two small children and running her home and became exhausted and depressed, and to Sally who was only a child of 15 herself when she had her baby. To these five women, then, nurturing has for various reasons not come easily. As was demonstrated in the case studies, the effect on these women of their not meeting the expectation to be continually nurturing was that they felt conflict and guilt, became depressed and/or questioned their worthiness. Sally at one point felt so incapable of caring for her daughter and so misunderstood and judged by professionals that she considered giving her up for adoption. The conflict generally experienced by women who assume the role of mother has already been discussed in the previous section where the pertinent literature was reviewed. The guilt experienced by women who do not meet the ideal image of a mother has also been the subject of much research (Bernard, 1974; Ehrenreich & English, 1978; Janeway, 1974; Miller, 1976; Unger, 1979; Williams, 1977). Bernard relates mothers' guilt to the way motherhood has been institutionalized in society. She states:

> Because of the demands we make, because we set impossibly high standards, our way of institutionalizing motherhood breeds guilt into the very force of a woman's character. She blames herself for every deviation from the model (1974, p.79).

So strong is the ideology of motherhood that it may even, as is demonstrated in the case of Denise, take precedence over reality such that reality is denied and the ideology is supported. According to Bernard (1974), the idealization of motherhood to the extent that reality is denied does not happen by chance; it is purposely encouraged, supposedly for the benefit of the child and to the detriment of women. She cites Mitscherleck (1968) to demonstrate the dominant culture's rationale for the idealization of motherhood.

> In the interest of the survival of the species the mother-child relationship has to be buttressed by social regulation, (but).... this is often not sufficient, and .... deficiencies have therefore to be covered up by idealization (p. 85)

Bernard explains the repercussions on women, children and society, generally, of falsely idealizing motherhood, and presents a proposal for structural changes in the institution of motherhood which takes into account, rather than negates reality.

Professionals and Institutional Policies

The effect on the participants of various professionals and/or institutional policies and practices (educational, medical, therapeutic, religious, legal and business) was documented. Individuals from all of the above professions were experienced as having both positive and negative effects on the women who sought out their services. Further, there were approximately the same number of negative experiences reported as positive regarding women's encounters with teachers, doctors, therapists, church officials, lawyers and employers. We can conclude, therefore, that in the experience of the participants, their significant encounters with professionals were just as likely to be negative as positive. This finding is in keeping with the results of a study by Weiss (1980) which demonstrated that 41% of the women surveyed had negative feelings toward their physicians' behavior, while 43% had positive feelings. According to the reports of the participants in this study, the positive experiences generally involved the woman feeling understood and respected and receiving helpful information and support. The negative experiences involved the women not being understood, being judged, humiliated or disrespected, and being hindered or sexually abused rather than helped. Gender of the professional was not a factor in determining whether the encounter was experienced positively or negatively, when the issue was whether or not the professional was understanding, supportive or helpful. However, in every case in which the woman felt humiliated or was sexually abused, the professional was a male. This finding is in keeping with the widely reported evidence that attitudes and acts of violence toward women are typically perpetrated by males. Men "get away with" this sort of behavior, according to experts, because they have the advantage of having greater public power and their aggressive behavior is socially sanctioned (Becker & Abel, 1978). As regards the medical profession, Sherwin (1979) explains in an article entitled, "The Implications of a Sexist Culture on the Doctor–Patient Relationship," that doctors are generally taught to assume that patients are weak, helpless and unable to think rationally, so doctors are required to behave paternalistically. The cultural stereotyping and devaluing of women compounds the disrespect male doctors have for female

patients, she maintains, the result of which often is "bad medicine."

Policies of institutions (educational, medical, church, business, government) that were reported to have had significant impact were all experienced as negative, with the exception of one woman having benefited from a legal change in the status of women. It cannot be concluded from this that only one positive experience with policy occurred in the lives of 13 women. It can only be said that in regards to the women's discussion of policy affecting their lives as women, only one positive experience was discussed and numerous negative experiences were discussed. However, this finding is in keeping with theoretical constructs which demonstrate that except for changes in our institutions which have come about through pressure from feminist groups, policies generally reflect institutionalized sexism (Unger, 1979) or a double standard in the social structure (Eichler, 1980). Further, that these policies are counter-productive to women's participation in society is supported.

Cultural/Political Factors and Meaning

Geophysical Setting

The effect of living in a rural setting was considered significant by six women in the study. Four women experienced country living as positive in that it provided them with particular freedoms and opportunities; one woman experienced country living with mixed feelings; and one woman experienced country living as negative in that it was isolating, restricted her development and reinforced her insecurities. Finally, one woman who grew up in the country, did not refer to this fact as significant. Of course it was not country living alone that was significant, either positively or negatively. Rather, it was country living combined with other factors such as relationships with parents, sex of siblings, poverty, illness, and the meaning of the woman's experience in the rural setting that made this factor significant or not. Thus, if the first lesson to be learned here is that it is necessary to explore the geophysical setting in-depth in order to understand its significance, the second lesson is that geophysical setting must be explored as only one of a number of factors which interact to give rise to a particular meaning. While psychologists rarely attend to information this broad in

scope (except perhaps to sometimes "control for it") social anthropologists and historians begin with such information as a background for understanding the people they wish to study. The study of psychological experience could benefit, it appears, from interactions with the disciplines of anthropology and history.

Cultural Differences

Cultural differences as a result of belonging to an ethnic minority or being an ethnic immigrant appear to have been a significant factor in the lives of five participants. The insecurity Mary developed in relation to her family's acceptance of the dominant WASP culture and its devaluing of her Hispanic origin is a classic case of the self-denigration experienced by minority status members. [19] In contrast, Marcela's recapturing and valuing of her Hungarian and Slovak ethnic culture (which her father tried to negate) has been to her a source of strength, and continues to be central to her academic and political activities. Her experience is an example of the more recent phenomenon, popularized by Arthur Hailey and his book, Roots, in which people are actively seeking out their histories and taking pride in their differences. We can only speculate on Sally's lack of direct comment about her Metis heritage. It could be that she isn't conscious of how her status affected her, or that she deliberately avoided the topic for any number of reasons, or that she did not make a connection between the initial research question and this dimension of her experience. The debate in leftist circles over which status, class or sex, takes precedence in determining the treatment of a person is considered here to be irrelevant. Instead of arguing which dimension of experience is more important, I would argue that for some women, class (or race) is also an important factor to be understood. Further, I would argue that any researcher who neglected to take class or race into account would be as negligent as one who neglected to take sex and gender into account. Some feminist researchers are taking both race and sex into account (Almquist, 1977, 1979; Lindsay, 1979; Stone, 1979) and some are looking at both class and sex (Anyon, 1980; Hartmann, 1981; Oakley, 1974).

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[19]This phenomenon has been widely evidenced among minority status groups including blacks, Jews, Italians, and women (Allport, 1958; Hacker, 1951; Myrdal, 1944).

Being an immigrant to Canada significantly affected the lives of three women. The two women (Mary and Elizabeth) who immigrated from the United States (and who, therefore, did not have to learn a new language) were less affected by their immigration than was Heidi, who immigrated from Germany and did not know the English language. Also affecting Heidi's immigrant experience was the fact that she lacked a higher education and was forced to work at low-paying factory jobs under poor working conditions, an experience common to immigrant women. Being an immigrant and not having family to turn to made Heidi's escape from her battering husband all the more difficult. That immigration has particular effects on women is now being demonstrated by feminist researchers whose work focuses specifically on the experiences of immigrant women (Ewen, 1980; Glenn, 1980; Hirata, 1979 Mathews, 1977). Mathews (1977) claims that migration theory has traditionally not investigated women's experience as migrants. Migrant wives have been like the urban women Lofland (1975) described, "simply there," part of the background against which the action is perceived. In her research, Mathews takes Smith's (1974) advice and begins from the point of view of women. Recognizing the importance of this new area of research, the Canadian journal, Resources for Feminist Research devoted an entire volume (Roberts & Ramkhalawansingh, Eds., 1979) to issues concerning immigrant and ethnic women.

Political/Economic Forces

Six women reported that political/economic forces including the 1930s depression, World War II and the Vietnam War affected their lives significantly. Beret (whose family was financially secure) felt untouched by the depression. She actually benefited from World War II, in that due to a teacher shortage she was needed to teach school, and therefore allowed to carry on with her career in spite of being a married woman with children. For the other five women the effects were negative. Because of the depression Denise was unable to continue her education as originally planned and Heidi's education was limited because of circumstances arising from World War II. In addition, as a direct result of World War II Heidi became a German refugee, forcefully displaced from her Czechozlovakian homeland; and Denise became a widow. Elizabeth suffered great

emotional stress in relation to her nursing experiences in Vietnam, which contributed to her severe depression and led to her eventual politicization and alienation from her church. Jean and Mary suffered emotionally as children due in part to the harsh wartime circumstances of their parents' lives.

The current threat of nuclear disaster was reported by three women (Elizabeth, Jean and Mary) – the same three who suffered emotionally from the effects of Vietnam and World War II – as having the effect of making them feel powerless. The effect on people of political/economic forces such as depression and war is widely studied by sociologists and historians, not by psychologists. Psychologists have become involved in treating male veterans of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, however. Results of this study demonstrate the importance of understanding the effect of war on women as well. Only feminist sociologists and historians have begun to examine the experiences of women in this respect.

Social/Political Ideology

Ideology is used here to describe ideas and images which are learned directly through religion and education, experienced in the legal, medical, social structures of society, read in books, magazines and papers, and transmitted in the form of images in movies, on radios, records and television. Smith (1975) defines ideology as follows:

> The concept of ideology here focuses on social forms of consciousness (the ways in which people think and talk with one another) which originate outside the actual working relations of people going about their everyday business and are imposed upon them (p. 355).

Its purpose, she explains, is to organize the social relations of individuals and to order their consciousness. She states:

> The ideas and images are a pervasive and fundamental mode which serve to organize, order and control the social relations, the working practices, the ideals and objectives, of individual members of the society (p. 356).

It is also the belief of Smith (1975) that women have been largely excluded from the production of ideology and that ideology, therefore, represents almost exclusively the perspectives and interests of men. She states:

> Women have historically and in the present been excluded from the production of the forms of thought, images, and symbols in which their experience and social relations are expressed and ordered.... Those who occupy the positions from which ideologies are produced and controlled are almost exclusively men. It is therefore their perspectives and interests which are represented (pp. 353-354).

It is from this position that I will examine women's reaction to and consciousness of patriarchal, democratic and feminist ideology.

All of the participants were conscious of the manifestations of patriarchal ideology in terms of the greater power of men in the public sphere, and/or the restriction of women's activities and choices and/or the lack of recognition and valuing of women's contributions to society. Further, all of the participants rejected either the ideology of patriarchy (the idea of male supremacy and female subordination) or the status quo under a patriarchal system. In some senses, then, all of the participants actively rejected their status as Other and experienced themselves as Subject. However, consciousness of the link between ideology and its manifestations in social structures, attitudes, norms, relationships and self-concept differed. For example, while Joan makes a connection between male dominance and female subordination in both public and domestic spheres, she does not relate this to the differential valuing of males and females generally. Thus, Joan rejects her formal status as Other and asserts herself as Subject in this sense. Beret, Heidi, and Denise, on the other hand, speak of the differential valuing of males and females, but do not relate this to the separation of the sexes or to greater male public power. They value the traditional work done by themselves and other women, and experience themselves as Subject in this sense. Sally (who has a grade eight education) recognizes that the basis for women's differential treatment is their biological difference from males and rejects that this is a legitimate basis for limiting women's choices and opportunities. This recognition, which comes totally from Sally's experience, is the basic premise from which renowned intellectuals such as Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Simone deBeauvoir, and Juliet Mitchell developed their analyses of women's oppression. Mary (who has two university degrees), also recognizes women's biological difference from males as the basis for their differential treatment. However, unlike Sally she accepts this as the fate of women who wish to have children. Formal education obviously does

not guarantee greater consciousness of women's condition. In fact Sally, who has survived great tragedy, in some ways appears to experience herself as Subject to a greater degree than does Mary, who generally feels powerless and a victim of fate. [20] Bem and Bem (1971) explained that the ideas of the proper subordination and limitation of women's sphere originated from patriarchal religion and is powerful because the ideology is nonconscious. Lipman-Blumen (1972) believes that this ideology is largely unconscious because it is implicit rather than explicit. She explains:

> (The ideas are) powerful systems of belief which shape the destiny of women in ways never imagined by Freud, are transmitted implicitly rather than explicitly; they usually guide the behavior of women silently and without their being consciously aware of it (p. 34).

Smith (1974, 1975, 1977b, 1979a) has made us conscious of how women have been kept in their place through ideology - ideology created in academic structures as well in the broader culture. Recent research has demonstrated, however, that whereas men's ideas of the sex stereotypes have not changed, women's ideas have changed in the past decade (Percival & Percival, 1979). In this study there are obvious differences among the participants in degree and kind of consciousness of patriarchal ideology. It appears that level of consciousness may be related to experience, and to the timing and relevance of information received (which may or may not be in the realm of formal education). Consider the difference in Joan's and Christine's consciousness of limitations for women in the real estate business. Christine, who had entered the business only recently, was thrilled with the sense of equality she experienced selling residential real estate. Joan, who had several years of experience and success in residential real estate and wanted to move into commercial real estate was aware of the barriers women faced who wanted to progress in the business. Neither woman experienced herself as a psychological Other, however. As to the effect of timing and relevance of information received, consider the discussions of Jean, Mary and Elizabeth, who explained that feminist literature provided them with an analysis which fit or made sense of their experience at a particular time in their lives. Their

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[20]Education may, however, have had an effect on Mary's greater consciousness regarding her ethnic minority status.

new consciousness gave them a sense of themselves as Subject, whereas previously they had experienced themselves as Other. For Beret, her interview for this study was a timely experience in that it focused her thinking on particular aspects of her life, and exposed her to a perspective (women's point of view) she had not previously considered. Her new consciousness helped her to more deeply understand the difficulties women experience as a result of having the status of Other, and to more deeply appreciate their struggles to be Subject. Thus, we see that consciousness of patriarchal ideology and its manifestations does change and that women's experience of themselves can change, too, with a change in consciousness. In her interview, Denise discussed the change in her own consciousness and self-concept. She explains that ten years ago she did not understand or perceive sexism, being too busy with her own struggles to reflect on her experiences. Rather, she assumed that everyone thought that women were equal to men the way her parents had. When she began to understand what sexism was, she began to see it all around her, and began to actively challenge it. She also began to be aware that it was important to consider her own needs and not always put the needs of others first. In these two senses, then, she increased her experience of herself as Subject. Consciousness of women's subordination under patriarchy is not enough, in and of itself, however, to guarantee women an easier life, as is seen in the cases of Marcela and Jean. Both women are highly conscious of the effects of patriarchal ideology on women's lives, and yet both are struggling at a personal level with emotional insecurities and with aspects of the feminine image which they internalized at earlier times. Thus, while consciousness of patriarchal ideology can encourage a woman's experiencing of herself as Subject, she may continue at some levels to experience herself as Other.

Women's negative identification as women has been demonstrated in the literature to be evident of women's struggle under patriarchal ideology. Hacker (1951) and Woolsey-Toews (1975) maintain that women's self-denigration and devaluation of other women relates to their identification of themselves or other women with their subordination and devaluation in society. Indicative of their self-denigration were Beret's and Madelaine's remarks prior to the interview that

they didn't think they had much of value to say, and Sally's remark at the end of the interview that she felt she hadn't contributed anything worthwhile. Indicative of their disassociation from the patriarchal definition of what women are *supposed to be* were Joan's and Alice's statements that they did not think of themselves as women, but as persons. Close examination of what was meant by this revealed that Joan did not consider herself to be like the "feminine" image of a woman who was weak, passive and subordinate. By thinking of herself as a person, she was rejecting the image of women as Other. Alice, though seeing herself as traditionally feminine, defines herself according to what she has done (study, teach, manage a business) which has nothing to do with being female or male, she believes. Further, she has not become "all those things I was *supposed* to be," i.e., a wife and mother. By thinking of herself as a person she has rejected the roles of wife and mother which limit women's lives and thus assume their Otherness.

Democratic ideology was alluded to in reference to education and work by the participants. Belief in equal opportunity (which was assumed would result in social equality) or career opportunity seemed to be a motivating force for seven women who had been encouraged by their parents or others to be educated. However, for the three women who had not been encouraged to achieve at school, the idea of equal opportunity reinforced their perceptions of themselves as inadequate – they saw themselves as lacking motivation. [21] Thus, democratic ideology seemed to work positively for those who received support and encouragement to gain an education, but worked negatively for those who lacked support and encouragement from others. That there are real restrictions to equal opportunity as regards education, and that these restrictions can relate to gender as well as to other factors was discussed by two women. As regards equal opportunity in jobs or careers we see from the discussions of three women (Christine, Alice, Denise) that their own success led them to assume that the notion of social equality was at work. Two of these women (Alice, Denise) assumed that this notion is also operating for others. A fourth woman (Joan) believes that social

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[21] The author has noted that this criticism of themselves as lacking motivation is also common to the women in her Second Look classes, who have typically been discouraged by their families of origin and by their husbands from establishing for themselves an independent job or career.

equality achieved by women at work is only illusory and that, by-in-large, the patriarchal structures which permit men more power and greater success still exist. There is much evidence in sociological literature to show that there are, in fact, an infinite number of barriers to equality for people of particular ethnic backgrounds, races, and religions, and for working class people as well as for women (Freeman, 1979; Glazer & Waehrer, 1977; Janeway, 1971; Millman & Kanter, 1975; Juliet Mitchell, 1969; Rossi, 1969). Anyon's (1981) work on women's accommodation and resistance to the feminine ideal is relevant here. Anyon describes how different women adjust to or reject the two ideologies of patriarchy and democracy, one of which teaches that women are subordinate and inferior, and the other of which teaches that all people are equal.

Finally, the women's reactions to and consciousness of feminist ideology was examined. Eleven women in the study supported the ideals and goals of the Women's Movement. The Women's Movement was credited by eight women as having raised their own consciousness regarding the destructive effects on women of patriarchal ideology. Specifically, feminist ideology meant to them that as women they deserve equal status and opportunities, equal respect, and the right to not be abused. They credited feminist ideology with teaching them to trust and develop relationships with other women, providing them with an understanding of their experience, legitimizing their lifestyle, helping them to recognize their own needs and reducing their sense of isolation or alienation. Further, seven women credited the Women's Movement with changing society in a positive way, for women. Four women stated directly or implied that changes made to benefit women would also benefit children and men by giving them more options and allowing them to develop themselves more fully.

Walker (1981) writes that feminist ideology serves to counter patriarchal ideology by providing an explanation for the gap between patriarchal ideology and women's realities, and by providing an alternate view. With this alternative available, women may better come to understand the reality of their own experiences, she explains. In her words:

> The disjunction between ideology, or the ways given us to understand an experience, and the actuality of our everyday lives is readily apparent to women once they have a way to recognize it is true. This recognition is one often provided by the feminist perspective (p. 36).

This, indeed, seems to be just what has happened for 11 of the 13 participants in this study. Feminist consciousness was relatively high in this group of women, although most of the women did not identify themselves as feminists and would not have considered themselves to be a part of the Women's Movement. Most of the participants would have fit into the growing category of women who typically begin their discussion of women's issues with the phrase, "I'm not a feminist, but...." It is impossible, of course, to generalize about the consciousness of women in relation to feminist ideology from this small group. However, by examining the concerns of the women about the Women's Movement, the conflicts and misunderstandings of the two women who did not generally support feminist ideals and goals, and the dialectic of feminist, patriarchal and democratic ideologies, we may come to a better understanding of women's experience in a culture which is founded on patriarchal ideology, which espouses democratic ideology (but which has limited success in realizing democracy), and which allows for the existence of alternative ideologies (feminist being only one of these) which in theory at least are free to challenge the ideology of the dominant, ruling class.

Certain of the reservations of the participants about the Women's Movement seem to arise from a misunderstanding of the meaning of a particular collective action. For example, Denise interpreted the act of women "burning their bras" to mean they wanted to be like men and were rejecting their uniqueness as women. She did not understand that what was being rejected was the objectification of women's bodies for the pleasure of men. That Denise misinterpreted the women's intentions is easy to understand, however, both because of the nature of the media publicity which covered the action, and because of the great emphasis of the contemporary Women's Movement in the late 60s and early 70s on gaining equality with men. It wasn't until the late 1970s that feminist theory turned to the issue of recognizing women's contribution to society and valuing particular female experiences. Joan and Theresa, too, expressed concern about "radicals" in the Women's Movement and the actions they

took on behalf of particular causes. There seemed to be at the basis of this concern, a judgment (coming from remnants of patriarchal definitions of femininity) that it was not *ladylike* for women to be loud and aggressive. Interestingly, however, as the participants continued to speak of their concerns with the radical activists, they seemed to convince themselves of the value of these actions in drawing attention to issues, and came to a realization that, given the status quo, radicals were forced to take extreme measures if they wanted to be heard.

The concern was expressed by a woman who does not identify herself as a feminist (Beret) and by one who does (Marcela), that "extremists" who reject men on principle are destructive to the Women's Movement. Given the close ties that most women have with men, the belief that feminism means anti-male is guaranteed to alienate women who might otherwise call themselves feminists, explained Marcela. Denise was concerned that in the rush to meet their own needs, women would forget about children. Although her concern clearly reflects the patriarchal attitude that nurturing children is the sole responsibility of women, it may also reflect a fear that becoming a person might mean to women becoming more like men (i.e., leaving the responsibility for child-care to someone else). This fear was part of Madelaine's conflict about feminist ideology. If women want to be equal, she wondered, does that mean they have to fight in wars? That this kind of misunderstanding of feminist ideology occurs can once again be attributed both to how the media and people in power portray the Women's Movement, and to the early emphasis of the Movement on gaining equal opportunity with men (in terms of dividing up the pie more fairly) as opposed to changing social structures and values. A complete misunderstanding of feminist ideology was demonstrated by Alice, who assumed that the patriarchal attitude toward women which judges women's success as "not bad *for a woman*" was feminist. Alice's rejection of feminist ideology also reflects identification with patriarchal ideology which teaches that only the exceptional woman with high status has credibility, and that women who, unlike herself, behave in an aggressive manner are not feminine and therefore are an embarrassment to their sex.

From women who are actively involved in the Women's Movement came two additional concerns. The existence of personal criticism and the competition between women in the Movement was perceived by Marcela to be a destructive force. The phenomenon of personal criticism seems to arise from members of the political left, who focus first on political theory and secondly define behavior in terms of whether or not it is "politically correct." The precedence given to ideas over experience, or to politics over behavior appears to mimic the precedence traditionally given to reason over emotion, and to the public domain over the private sphere. These attitudes are patriarchal in origin. Thus, it seems likely that the tendency of certain members of the Women's Movement to criticize women's personal lives rather than to try to understand and account for women's different experiences will be destructive to the Movement and to women. In addition, it will serve as a barrier to the further development of feminist ideology. The problem of competition among feminists appears to reflect the general attitude toward competition in Western society. Although feminism espouses the ideology of cooperation and equality, there are problems at both the personal and political levels, of understanding and accepting our differences. Thus, the Women's Movement encounters the same problem as other movements: how to account for and successfully build on the differences of its members. Finally, the concern of Joan that the Women's Movement requires much work and energy, and that it involves fighting the status quo and people who see no need for change, brings up two issues. There is, of course, the personal issue which each woman faces in her daily life as she is forced to decide at what level to be involved in the Women's Movement and how much time and energy she can give without experiencing what is commonly known in the helping professions as "burn out." The second issue involves the realization that along with making changes in the social structures and institutions which would reflect the equal status and valuing of women, there continues to be a need for education as to the far-reaching effects of patriarchal ideology, the limitations of democracy and the meaning of feminist ideology.

In discussing the goals of feminism, eleven participants referred to changes they thought would be necessary in order that these goals be achieved. Four

participants spoke of personal changes women needed to make, namely, to respect themselves, to value themselves, to assume their equality and to be assertive. Eight participants spoke of specific social changes needed (day care, health, therapy, religion, law, policies, social attitudes, sexist language) in order that women be treated fairly. Finally, one woman spoke of the need for women to organize around women's issues and as well to join with other organized groups to fight for issues which concern all of humankind. It is recognition of the need for women to support each other and to demand changes collectively, that demands of women a political consciousness. Fransella and Frost (1977) support the notion that both personal relationships and social institutions must be changed in order that women reach the goals of feminism. In other words, women must experience themselves as Subject both in terms of their personal relationships and in relation to the social institutions in their communitites, if they are to truly achieve equality. Only three participants in this study discussed the need for change on both levels. The need for women to pool their experience and work cooperatively for change becomes obvious. Together the participants have the experience from which to base a plan for social change. Alone, they can only hope to find personal solutions to the problems they face, as women.

Evidence of conflict between feminist, patriarchal and democratic ideologies was most obvious in the case of Alice, who confused patriarchal and feminist ideology (ie., confused the idea of token women with affirmative action) and who assumed that society operates democratically ("women will get as many breaks as anyone else" and "I can't think of any part of this world now, that isn't open to both men and women"). Another example of conflict in ideologies involves the definition of equality. Madelaine confused democratic and feminist ideology in that she assumed that feminists would have women go to war in their haste to be equal to men. That Madelaine should experience this kind of confusion is not surprising considering the reactions of government and media spokespersons who also assume that women's equality means they be treated the *same* as men. It was this kind of misunderstanding of feminist ideology which resulted in the Alberta government's policy statement that women should not receive maternity benefits

because men did not. The uneven development of the Women's Movement and the continual need to enlarge and refine feminist ideology is also in part responsible for the confusion of the uninitiated on some issues.

Evidence of conflict between ideologies can also be found in the structure of language used by some of the women. Joan, for example, who feels that the double standard she experiences in her marriage and in business is not fair, continually uses tentative language (probably, sometimes, I guess, kind of, etc.) Kramer (1975) writes that women's use of such qualifiers is indicative of the difficulty they have stating an opinion directly. Lakoff (1973, 1975) maintains that women's language contains patterns of uncertainty compared to men's more forceful statements, and that this difference is indicative of the recognition of male dominance and female subordination by both sexes. Joan's remark about certain successful women having slept their way to the top is another example of how language reflects dominant social attitudes. Smith (1979b) warns that using the oppressor's language distorts women's behavior and alienates women from their own experience and from each other. The process is political, she explains. In Henley's (1975) terms, language is a micro-political structure which helps to establish, express and maintain power relationships. Thus, even as Joan speaks of her dissatisfaction with the manifestations of patriarchal ideology, she is struggling with its effects on her, as indicated by her patterns of speech. Even in her cry against being treated as Other, she remains Other. Beret's language during the interview was also highly tentative. In her case, however, her tentativeness appears to reflect not a conflict of ideologies but the internalizing of the patriarchal ideology which devalues women's experience. Nevertheless, in this sense she, too, is Other. Interestingly, her response to the questionnaire sent out six months after the interview (presented at the beginning of this chapter) shows not only a change in consciousness but also a change in the directness and firmness of her language. Thus, a change in consciousness which results in the changing psychological experience of a woman from Other to Subject is reflected in her language.

One more point about language and its meaning. Denise thinks she is "lucky" in that she has not experienced the hardships that many people have – that she is

lucky to have had a warm and comfortable home, loving family, work she found challenging and satisfying, etc. Attribution theory has demonstrated that unlike men, women attribute their successes to external forces such as fate, rather than to internal forces such as their own determination or competence (Gannon, 1980). Denise's attributing her own life successes to luck could be interpreted in this way, the assumption being that she does not give herself credit for her own abilities. It could also be, however, that Denise recognizes that there are forces quite beyond her control which worked for rather than against her – that the circumstances of her life have been largely positive whereas others have been deprived. It could be that Denise's reference to her luck in this sense, could reflect a consciousness that democratic ideals do not become manifest in everyone's lives, rather than reflecting patriarchal judgment as to her own lack of worth.

A final point concerning ideology. Griffin (1982) reminds us of the danger of ideology which is given precedence over reality. Any idea can become oppressive if it hides the truth to the benefit of one group and the detriment of another. It has been demonstrated in this study how patriarchal ideology supports the inequality of women, and democratic ideology hides the truth about existing inequalities. Feminist ideology is in its infancy. In Freeman's words, "initially there was little ideology in the women's movement beyond a gut feeling that something was wrong" (1979, p. 568). Feminist ideology, as it develops, has the potential to hide the truth. If it becomes merely the reverse of patriarchal ideology (which is not its purpose, although this is not generally understood by people who are not feminists), it will hide the truth about and oppress men. The women would be Subject and men would be Other. If it is based on the experience of a narrow group of women (white, educated professionals, for example) it will hide the truth about and oppress women who do not fit this category. Then some women would be Subject and some women would be Other. The latter has already happened around certain women's issues. Tension between feminists and non-feminists over issues such as child-care, paid work, abortion, etc. arises from each group's perception of themselves as Other in relation to the different group's status as Subject. The same phenomenon occurs between different feminist factions over

clothing, make-up, work, children, men, etc. Griffin (1982) describes a similar phenomenon taking place in her own mind which she describes as a conflict between her political and psychological selves. If it is understood that any ideology has the potential to oppress, and if care is taken to ensure that feminist ideology reflects the reality of all women and the total experience of any one woman, then perhaps feminist ideology can achieve its goal of eliminating the Other from human experience.

D. Meaning and Context: A Dialectic

There is a dynamic relationship between the meanings women give to their experience as women and the context of their lives. From the most personal matters to the social and cultural/political, meanings are attributed to experiences which are at the same time defined, categorized and judged in the social context. In all dimensions of experience both positive and negative meanings were found, and for every meaning there exists an individual/interpersonal/social/economic/cultural/political context in which life is experienced. Thus, the participants were demonstrated to be multi-dimensional. They have changed over time in some ways and remained constant in others. They differed from each other in some ways and shared common meanings in other ways. Contrary to deBeauvoir's (1952) theory, they were not simply Other - victims of a society which defines them as the Second Sex. Examination of the negative meanings of being a woman revealed that the participants were aware of social definitions and expectations that assumed their Otherness. However, it was demonstrated that they sometimes accepted and sometimes rejected these definitions and expectations. Examination of the positive meanings the participants gave to their experience as women, made clear that they found satisfaction in being women in spite of definitions and expectations which devalued and limited them. These women, then, were demonstrated to be sometimes Subject and sometimes Other, and in some ways conscious of their status as Other and in some ways not.

Depending on her individual temperament, family history, past experiences and current situation, each participant experienced a greater or lesser struggle with her status as Other and with her psychological experience as Subject/Other. Examination of

the context of women's lives made clear that either positive or negative meanings can be derived from any one individual factor, from family relationships, from social factors, and from cultural/political factors. What also becomes evident is that these various dimensions have a tremendous impact on women's experience and directly affect the meanings women give to their experience. It is held that an examination of both the meanings and the context of women's experience as women provides psychologists and sociologists with a broader and deeper understanding of the various contextual factors affecting women's psychology. It is hoped that the bridging of these two disciplines will result in an advance in feminist theory.

IX. Conclusion and Implications

A. Conclusion

deBeauvoir theorized in the Second Sex (1952), that just as women are subordinate to men in the social order, they are also psychologically subordinate – that unlike men, they experience themselves as Other instead of as Subject. It was argued in Chapter I that deBeauvoir's theory of women's psychological experience was simplistic (in that she assumed psychology to be a reflection of sociology, and women, therefore, to be passive victims of patriarchal oppression) and androcentric (in that she judged women's experience in terms of the values and priorities of a male–dominated social order). deBeauvoir's theory was also faulty because while she asked herself, "What has it meant to me to be a woman?", she failed to ask this question of women unlike herself. Instead, she viewed women's experience from her own perspective and interpreted this to be the experience of "woman." Finally, deBeauvoir's theory was viewed critically because she determined that if women were to be true Subjects of their lives, they must "choose" to be, thus limiting "the problem of women" to the existential realm and ignoring the social realm. In this sense, deBeauvoir appears to be elitest: she lacks an understanding of the effect of real barriers to equality on women less fortunate than herself, and judges their behavior to be a passive acceptance of their definition as Other.

The Case Studies

The purpose of this study was to examine the meanings women give to their experience as women, and the context of this experience. To this end, 13 women with different life experiences were interviewed. The case studies demonstrated that the participants, regardless of their age, education, work experience, etc., can provide a structure for their life experience in which the meanings of their experience as women and the important factors affecting this experience emerge. An in–depth examination of each participant's experience as a woman revealed that different women have different meanings for the same terms used by them to describe their experience. Further, is was revealed that women's experience as women is highly complex. For example, it was demonstrated that what are often assumed to be diametrically–opposed and exclusive traits were often present simultaneously. Further, these traits were demonstrated to

occur in particular contexts. The complexity of women's experience as women was also demonstrated in that each woman attributed a variety of meanings to her experience as a women. In addition, it was seen that these meanings can change over time. Further, the same experience might have different meanings for different women. Thus, the simplicity of deBeauvoir's (1952) theory of women as a psychological Other appears suspect.

The Meanings of Being a Woman

It was expected that the meanings women gave to their experience as women, and their descriptions of these meanings, would reveal that they experienced themselves sometimes or in some ways as Subject, not simply as Other. Further, it was expected that if women experienced a reality different from what is formally defined (i.e., if there was a perceived gap between reality and the dominant ideology), then this would also be revealed. Indeed, both expectations were born out. From the six positive and six negative meanings the participants gave to their experience as women, it was demonstrated that in some ways they experience themselves as Other and in some ways they experience themselves as Subject. It was also demonstrated that women's experience of themselves as Other or as Subject in any one sense can change over time. Again, women's psychological experience as women is seen to be much more complex than what deBeauvoir theorized.

It was demonstrated that the six negative meanings of being a woman resulted directly or indirectly from attitudes toward (or expectations placed on) women that stem from notions about the definition of women as Other in relation to men – as subordinate to men, as subject to abuse by men, as properly dependent on men, as restricted to roles which benefit men, or as limited in their opportunities compared to men. Further, it was demonstrated that the women might be defined as Other in two ways: Other in relation to men who are Subject, or Other in relation to the ideal image of femininity as defined under patriarchy. However, the participants did not necessarily accept the definition of Otherness in either sense. Some women experienced themselves as Other in some ways and as Subject in different ways. For example, Marcela rejected her emotional life which she believed to be inferior to men's intellectual lives, and Jean rejected her appearance which she believed to be inadequate compared to the feminine

ideal. In other ways, however, both Marcela and Jean experienced themselves as Subject (in their studies and work, for example), and both publically defended the right of women to be equal. Sometimes a woman's experience of herself changed over time – whereas she experienced herself as Other at one time, at a later time she experienced herself as Subject. For example, when Joan decided with the support of her doctor to leave her children with a babysitter and go out to work, she experienced herself as Subject instead of Other. Mary underwent a similar change when she decided with the help of a therapist and her friends to leave her first marriage. The converse also happens. Heidi experienced herself as Subject in relation to her parental family, but after she married began to experience herself as Other in relation to her husband. Her experience of Otherness expanded throughout her marriage and at the time her husband "kept her hostage" in their basement, she experienced this almost totally. She felt herself then to be "a fly against a bulldozer."

The rejection of the definition of Other was tremendously difficult for women who perceived themselves as having no alternative and no support. Women who were sexually and psychologically abused and physically exploited in their homes as children (as in the case of Christine and Elizabeth) and were powerless to change their situations experienced a psychological sense of Otherness which took many years to overcome. Further, they required extensive therapy to help them regain a sense of themselves as Subject.

The findings of this thesis suggest that women's definition as Other may result in their internalizing this definition and experiencing themselves psychologically as Other. However, they may also reject the definition and with the knowledge that an alternative is available may establish themselves as Subject with varying degrees of struggle. In no case, however, are they passive victims of their subordination. Behavior which may appear to others to be passive and accommodating may be viewed by the woman herself as her best strategy for coping with her life circumstances, given her past experience and perceived alternatives. Heidi's "decision" to stay with her abusive husband, Elizabeth's and Sally's suicide attempts, and Alice's "playing feminine" can all be understood as a best response to a particular situation under the circumstances. An indepth study of the social and psychological factors operating in the women's lives

revealed that behind seemingly passive behavior lay reasoned action. For example, Heidi's tolerance of the physical and psychological abuse she experienced with her husband can be seen as deliberate action on her part. By staying in the marriage, she was being a good wife and mother in the eyes of her church. Further maintaining financial support from her husband enabled her to provide her children with the education that she had been denied. However, in the case of children, who are always in a situation of having less power than the adults on whom they depend, their dependence and powerlessness seems to preclude their independent experience of themselves as Subject when they are consistently treated as Other (i.e., when they are abused by their parents). Support or encouragement from outside the family (such as Elizabeth had from her teachers) can provide some experience of being a Subject. However, if the abuse in the home is extreme, the experience of Otherness will outweigh the experience of being a Subject with devastating consequences. Professional assistance in addition to support from others will likely be necessary in order that a sense of self as Subject can be established.

It was demonstrated that the six positive meanings of being a woman reflected experiences in which the participants experienced themselves as Subject. They varyingly enjoyed themselves, found fulfillment or satisfaction in being womanly or sexual, in nurturing children, in being warm, understanding, helpful, etc., in achieving relationships, in paid work, or in the ideals and goals of the Women's Movement. The ways in which the participants experienced themselves as Subject did not simply reflect their accommodation to a definition of femininity. Whereas the majority of participants enjoyed their physical selves in some way, only one perceived herself to be "feminine" in the stereotypic sense, and she interpreted her behaviour to be an act (playing at being feminine) which gave her power. Thus, even though she publically played at being submissive (Other) she privately maintained a sense of herself as Subject.

As regards women's experience being mothers, it was discovered that it is necessary to distinguish between valuing one's children and finding satisfaction in nurturing those children. While all mothers stated they valued their children, less than half found satisfaction in nurturing children. Of those who did, none limited their work to nurturing children – all found meaning and satisfaction in paid work as well. The

institutionalization of motherhood – the *role* of mother and the expectations that a mother's activities necessarily need to be limited to nurturing children, that responsibility for parenting belongs largely to her alone, and that she *naturally* feels always loving toward her children – undermines the mother/child relationship. Thus, the stereotype of the nurturing mother who retains power over her family in the home and finds fulfillment in her duties is challenged.

Also challenged is the stereotype of the feminine woman who is warm, caring, sensitive, understanding and helpful (less than half of the participants perceived and valued this in themselves). That all of the participants found satisfaction in achieving relationships could at first glance be seen as stereotypic, i.e., women are other–directed. However, close examination revealed that women were discriminating in the meanings they gave to particular relationships. Families of origin were valued by most participants but for a variety of reasons. In some instances participants experienced themselves as Other in relation to families and in some instances they experienced themselves as Subject. Most marriages were experienced with greater dissatisfaction than satisfaction, although current marriages were all valued. (Divorce meant to most participants the rejection of the experience of Otherness and the assertion of oneself as Subject.) Friends were valued highly (by all but one participant) and were generally defined as people with whom one could be oneself and feel equal, i.e., be Subject. Friendships with women were particularly valued by the majority of participants, and were typically spoken of as being a relatively new experience. Perhaps women's other–directedness can be more fully understood as women creating for themselves experiences in which they are Subject, within the confines of a society which defines them as Other. The participants are also seen to be inner–directed, however, in so far as they also value their paid work outside of the home. Paid work, they explained, offered them a chance to feel independent, capable, challenged and useful. In other words, working outside the home for pay (no matter the status of the job) allowed the women the experience of being Subject. This challenges the stereotypic image of the feminine woman who is satisfied with nurturing children and working at home for no pay. Further, it challenges the notion that if women are other–directed, then they cannot also be inner–directed.

Finally, the majority of the participants valued the ideals and goals of the Women's Movement, although most would not consider themselves feminists. Generally, they had been personally affected by the Women's Movement in a positive way in that it provided them with an analysis that fit their experience, taught them to value themselves and their women friends, legitimized their concerns, and pressured for social and legal change which benefited them. Thus, the Women's Movement was perceived to support women's struggle to be Subject, socially and psychologically. There were, however, some confusions about feminist ideology and a lack of understanding or misinterpretation of the meaning of particular feminist actions or goals. The confusions can be attributed both to misrepresentation in the media and to confusion or debate within the Movement itself as to its goals and practices. Reservations held about the Women's Movement by women not actively involved paralleled the concerns of women who were involved in the movement.

Women's Experience in Context

Investigation of the histories and circumstances of the participants' lives gives us a broader understanding of their experience as Subject and/or Other. Personal factors (health, physical appearance, temperament), though particular to one individual, must be understood in terms of how each factor is perceived by or interacts with the larger culture. Health and illness are socially defined as well as individually experienced, and treatment is offered or withheld according to the values and priorities of the medical structure, which in turn reflects the values and attitudes of society generally. Thus, the judgment of women as less valuable than men, affects women's experience of themselves as Other in relation to health and illness. Accurate knowledge of their own physiology and an awareness of the origin of misinformation can help women experience themselves as Subject in this sense. Physical appearance, too, is experienced in terms its societal meaning. Because women have been defined as sexual objects, and because it has been expected that women gain an identity through marriage, physical appearance has been an area of great significance and vulnerability to women. Should they not attain the standard of femininity which prescribes how they should ideally appear, they are more likely to experience themselves as Other.

Temperament can be reinforced and can be experienced as advantageous or disadvantageous within culture. Shy, withdrawn, or passive personalities whose life experience reinforced these tendencies, seem to run a greater risk of experiencing themselves as Other than do more determined and active personalities. Thus, it is held that it is imperative to examine individual factors as they are situated within a culture. Investigation of these individual factors in isolation, or in a controlled, laboratory atmosphere, results in a limited, superficial understanding at best and a completely inaccurate and distorted understanding at worst.

Family relationships and dynamics were demonstrated to be highly significant determinants of whether women experience themselves as Other or Subject. Relationships with mothers were largely conflicted, due (it seems) to the social definition of both mother and daughter as Other and their various ways of trying to cope with this. Daughters may experience rejection from mothers if they are perceived to be less valuable than sons or less feminine than the ideal. Daughters may also experience rejection when mothers have too many problems of their own to contend with, when needy mothers expect their daughters to nurture them, or when mothers fear their daughters' developing sexuality. Daughters may reject mothers because they are not nurturing, because they do not respect their mothers' way of coping with their definition of Otherness, or because they experience that their mothers want nothing more for them than they are themselves (Other). At the same time, daughters want to be loved and accepted by their mothers, to respect their mothers as Subjects, and to be encouraged by them to be Subject. Thus, there exists a great potential for conflict. When daughters experienced their mothers to be loving, worthy of respect and encouraging, the relationships were viewed as positive. When none of these were experienced, the relationships were perceived as negative. The fact that positive and negative relationships were by far in the minority and conflicting relationships in the majority suggests that mother/daughter relationships commonly reflect the struggle of women (both mothers and daughters) to be Subject in a world that defines them as Other.

Relationships with fathers were more varied: they were experienced as positive, conflicting, negative and, in addition, as inconsequential. Father/daughter relationships that were experienced as positive were described as loving and supportive and the

father was respected (as with mothers). Conflicting relationships resulted when one or two of the positive features was missing and the father was perceived to be inadequate himself or to have limited expectations for his daughter (as with mothers). Negative relationships with fathers were extremely abusive or oppressive (whereas with mothers there typically was just an absence or lack of nurturance and/or support.) The fourth category of father/daughter relationships – inconsequential – is attributed to the stereotyped notion of men as not particularly involved in family matters, which, therefore, supports a father's lack of involvement with his daughter and creates or reinforces the daughter's lack of expectation that she be supported by her father. This phenomenon was also present in two of the conflicting father/daughter relationships, but to a lesser degree (i.e., fathers were perceived to have had less effect on daughters than did mothers). It seems that the lesser incidence of conflicting relationships and greater incidence of positive relationships, greater degree of abusive relationships and the added phenomena of inconsequential relationships with fathers compared to mothers can be explained in terms of men's and women's differing definitions as Subject and Other. Fathers' are formally defined as Subject, uninvolved and unemotional, who have the *option* to be loving, abusive or absent. Daughters benefit from a loving and supportive relationship with fathers, or are harmed by abuse and oppression, but are unlikely to reject the father if he is more or less ungiving or absent (physically or emotionally). In contrast, mothers and daughters are formally defined as Other and both struggle against this definition and its consequences, resulting in a greater incidence of conflict. Further, the mother is more likely to be rejected by the daughter if she fails to be nurturing or is perceived to be physically or emotionally absent, because she is expected to be emotionally involved.

The dynamic between mother and father was also demonstrated to be important to the participants' experience of themselves as Subject or Other. A mutually respectful and loving relationship between parents, or a dynamic whereby the mother stood up to a father who assumed she should be subordinate, encouraged daughters to perceive themselves as Subject. In contrast, daughters who perceived their parents to be emotionally distant or perceived their mothers as accepting a subordinate position in relation to their husbands, experienced more difficulty being Subject. In the first

instance they were generally insecure emotionally and lacked the confidence necessary to be Subject. In the second instance they either modelled their mother's Otherness or, if they rejected it, did not have a vision of how to be Subject. Sibling dynamics were also important factors for some participants in terms of number of siblings, sex of siblings and birth order. Eldest daughters in large families seemed the most vulnerable to abuse. Social circumstances such as rural lifestyle and financial security interacted with sibling dynamics and resulted in positive or negative effects on daughters. Relationships with elder female relatives and to a somewhat less extent with elder male relatives were experienced both positively and negatively.

Various social factors were seen to have had a significant effect on the participants as regards their experience of themselves as Other or Subject. Financial and social status were seen to have had either a positive or negative effect on the experience of more than half of the participants. If financial status had a negative effect, it did not necessarily follow that social status would also have a negative effect, however. It is therefore concluded that psychological theory should take these factors into account, and not simply control for them. It is further concluded that social and financial status should be viewed as two separate factors, not as one joint factor. Friendships in childhood and the fact of belonging or not belonging to a group of peers was also significant to a majority of the participants. While psychological theory on child development recognizes the importance of childhood friendships or lack thereof, personality and counselling theory generally fails to consider this experience. Behavourial theory focuses almost exclusively on current experience and discounts childhood experience; and psychoanalytic theory limits its examination of personal history to the family of origin.

Social norms were seen to have affected the participants' experience of themselves as Other or Subject in so far as they experienced expectations regarding education, work, marriage, child care and maternal love. While they experienced different expectations regarding education and work, they all experienced the expectation that they *should be* married, or that marriage was normal or inevitable, if not ideal. Similarly, all the participants experienced the expectation that as women they must *naturally* enjoy nurturing children, and those who had children learned that they *should*

stay home and care for them. If the expectations *fit* a woman's situation or behaviour, the social norms and values were experienced as reinforcing, and the likelihood of a woman experiencing herself as Subject (in the sense of meeting the standard of the feminine ideal) was increased. If her situation or behaviour did not fit the norm (if she did not marry or did not enjoy nurturing children, for example), she was more likely to experience herself as Other (in the sense of being a failure as a woman – less than ideal). However, given that the roles of wife and mother define women as Other in relation to men, women who fit the ideal image of femininity or meet social expectations re marriage and maternal nurturing may still experience themselves as Other in relation to men. The phenomenological analysis carried out in this thesis suggests that the *institutions* of marriage and motherhood undermine relationships with husbands and children. Similarly, it was demonstrated that mother/daughter and father/daughter relationships were in different ways undermined by women's formal definition and experience of Other in relation to men, and their experience as Other in relation to a feminine ideal.

The effects on women of professionals and institutional policies is rarely investigated by psychologists. This study demonstrates that professionals can exert either a significant positive or negative effect on women's experience of themselves as Subject *or* Other. There was no gender difference in the professionals as regards their being respectful or not, helpful or not, or supportive or not. Only male professionals were experienced as being abusive, however. The abusive behaviour of male professionals was similar to that of abusive fathers in that the women were defined as Other in the sense of being sexual objects who could be exploited by men. The professionals who were sexually abusive toward women in this study were therapists – both psychiatrists and psychologists. While sexual harassment of female clients by male therapists has recently been recognized as a problem by professional organizations, [22] little action has been taken against professionals to this time, to the knowledge of the author. Policy was primarily experienced by the participants as having a negative effect – as assuming women's Otherness compared to men. It is concluded that if psychologists continue to fail to examine in their research the effect on women of

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[22]The Psychologists Association of Alberta in 1982 sent a letter to members stating the position of the organization against such behaviour on the part of psychologists.

social factors such as professionals' behaviour and institutional policies, they will continue to fail to understand women's experience in its complexity.

The broadest dimensions of experience – the cultural/political forces which are generally examined by sociologists, anthropologists and historians but only infrequently examined by psychologists – were also seen to have affected the participants tremendously. Living in a rural setting had a significant impact (positive and negative) on some participants. Being a member of an ethnic minority or being an immigrant also exerted both positive and negative effects. For certain individuals, cultural difference or immigrant status were major factors in their experience of themselves as Other. Political/economic forces such as the depression of the 1930s, World War I, the Vietnam War and the current threat of nuclear disaster also had varying effects on the participants and were major forces in certain individuals' lives. These forces, like the cultural forces, while sometimes having a positive effect, more often had a negative effect. While they may have directly contributed to women's experience as Other (or Subject) in relation to men, they also frequently resulted in complications which made even more difficult women's struggle against their definition as Other.

Ideology may consciously or unconsciously affect women's experience of themselves as Subject or Other. The participants were to varying degrees conscious of patriarchal ideology (i.e., the legitimization of male power and the devaluing of women) and how it had adversely affected them. It was also demonstrated that in different ways and to varying degrees they had rejected aspects of patriarchal ideology. Again, they resisted the definition of themselves as Other in some senses and asserted themselves as Subject. Democratic ideology was seen to have had a positive effect in that it taught women they could be equal to men in terms of value and opportunities. It could also have a negative effect, however, in that it hid the fact that sometimes women's failure to achieve was based on discrimination or restriction. Thus, it encouraged women to attribute their experience to personal failure and to experience themselves as Other.

Feminist ideology was viewed by the majority of women in this study to have had a positive influence on women generally and on themselves particularly. It made them aware of specific elements of patriarchal ideology and its manifestations which had been destructive to them. In addition, it offered them an alternative in that it demanded their

right to equal status, equal opportunities, equal pay, etc., and their right to live without abuse. In other words, feminist ideology filled the gap between patriarchal ideology and the reality of women's lives. It was not accepted without criticism, however. Some criticism involved judgments based on patriarchal attitudes and values (i.e., women should be passive and ladylike), and some criticism was based on a misunderstanding of patriarchal and feminist ideology or a lack of consciousness as to the limitations of democratic ideology. However, other criticism was based on a concern that some feminists would treat all men or particular women as Other, and simply be reversing or continuing a destructive force already present under patriarchy. Change at both the personal level and at the social/political level was recognized by the participants collectively, as necessary in order that women experience themselves fully as Subject. Individually, however, the participants were only partially conscious of the kinds and degrees of change necessary.

B. Implications

Implications for Psychological Research

The implications for psychologists and their future research has already been alluded to in the conclusion section. The experiences which women perceive as negative obviously require further investigation. The problems of women who experience themselves psychologically as Other need to be more thoroughly understood so that these women can be better helped, and so that the need for social change be more widely perceived. The ways in which women experience themselves as Subject also need further investigation in order that we know what strengths we have to build on. Different kinds of questions must be asked by psychologists in order that we gain the knowledge we require today. Failure to investigate the meaning to women of their behaviour or experience results in a failure to understand their psychological experience. Consequently, theory about women will be inaccurate or distorted. If norms and expectations are viewed simply as necessary prescriptions for behaviour, rather than investigated as to their effect on women, theories of women's psychological experience will continue to be impoverished and to reinforce women's status as Other. Further, if psychologists ignore the broad social/cultural/political context of women's lives, they

will continue to falsely expect that women's personal solutions and individual choices are the only kinds of change necessary for them to be wholly functioning, healthy people. In other words, it is imperative that psychologists examine both the *meaning* to women of their experience and the broad *context* of this experience, in order that their understanding transcend the definition of women as Other. Of course, there are implications here for the understanding of human experience as well. Understanding the ramifications of expectations on men to be masculine may reveal that some men, too, experience themselves as Other in relation to the ideal of masculinity. Further, the effect on men of being formally defined as Subject, if more comprehensively examined, might reveal that behaviour assumed to be "normal" for men (i.e., aggressiveness, violence) may be the result of their attempt to accommodate themselves to a definition which emphasizes their powerfulness. The implications for further understanding of human experience can only begin to be surmised.

The need to ask questions about the meaning and context of experience makes obvious the need for psychologists to use research methods other than the traditional, empirical science method. This is not to say that the empirical method is inferior, only that it has limitations – it is simply a means to a particular kind of knowledge. Questions about meaning require a phenomenological-type approach, and questions about context require a critical theory-type approach. While it was demonstrated that the notions of objectivity and neutrality serve to conceal the limitations of the empirical method, the other methods also have limitations. The phenomenological method, which uses the researcher as an interviewing tool, is dependent on the competence of the interviewer for its success. An unskilled interviewer would be as detrimental to a phenomenological study as would a sexist test to an empirical study. Gender, personality and professional credibility were identified by the participants of this study as important factors in their being open in the interview. The implications, therefore, are that when using the phenomenological method of research, care must be taken that the interviewer have the necessary communications skills and be perceived as credible and as warm, friendly and non-judgmental. As regards gender, it seems likely at this time that most women will be more comfortable with female interviewers. It cannot be assumed from this, however, that most men will be more comfortable with male interviewers, since research

demonstrates that men more often choose to speak about personal matters with women, than with men (Woolsey-Toews, 1971). If there is a concern about whether a male or female interviewer would be most appropriate, individual participants could be allowed to choose the gender they prefer. The researcher also plays a major role in critical theory research, in so far as the consciousness of the researcher as to the relevance of social/cultural/political factors to psychological experience can be limited. The ability of the researcher to understand, organize and integrate various kinds of experiences is also crucial to this method. Thus the quality of the analysis is dependent on the consciousness and the analytical skills of the researcher. Use of the phenomenological method in conjunction with critical theory serves the purpose of ensuring that the participants', not just the interviewer's interpretations, will be represented in the critical theory analysis. Exposing the dialectic between context and meaning also provides for greater understanding of how social/cultural/political factors are manifest in psychological experience. A study, such as this one, which uses a phenomenological/critical theory approach (in this case to understand women's psychological experience as Other and Subject) could be used as a basis for the development of an instrument which in an empirical study could test the validity of new concepts.

Implications for Psychological Theory

That women give particular meanings to their experiences as women challenges psychological theory which assumes them to be a blank slate whose behavior is *determined* by environmental factors. Thus, behavioral psychology is demonstrated to be too simplistic to explain women's experience. That women react against their status as Other – reject labels which they perceive to be inaccurate and consciously act to change circumstances which they experience as oppressive – challenges psychological theory which assumes them to be *passive victims* of their social circumstances. Thus, social learning theory is also demonstrated to be too simplistic to explain women's experience. The findings of this study regarding the familial, social, cultural, political, and ideological factors which influenced women's experience as women challenges psychological theory which assumes women's behavior to be *biologically determined* (psychoanalytic theory), to be *innate* to their person or gender (personality trait theory),

or be their *personal responsibility* (humanistic psychology). These theories, too, are demonstrated to be too simplistic to account for the total of women's experience as women. A more complex theory of the psychology of women (and humans) is obviously required. This study has begun the groundwork for such a theory. Understanding the meaning women give to their experience as women and the contexts in which they live their lives enables us to see women's behavior as neither innately nor environmentally determined. Rather, we see women as individuals with particular temperaments, physiologies and human potentials (and with particular personal, famililial, social, and cultural/political histories) who actively *negotiate* their experience with those persons, institutions and ideologies which attempt to define it. The new theory would be *dialectical* in that a *between the actor and her circumstances would be recognized. In other words, a dialectical theory would acknowledge both change over time and the connection between the personal and the political. The potential of individuals to act upon and change their circumstances and give meaning to their experiences would be recognized. At the same time it would be recognized that social/cultural/political dimensions affect individuals experience and consciousness. Neither factor determines the other and neither is simply a reflection of the other. Rather, the relationship between the two involves a process which stimulates change in both and creates new solutions and problems and new perspectives. It is this process* of interaction, of women actively negotiating their life circumstances, that a new psychological theory of personality/development must reflect.

Implications for Counselling Women

The Broverman et al (1970) study demonstrated that therapists, like other members of society generally, viewed healthy women as having adjusted to their gender roles. In other words, therapists perceived women as Other, and presumably attempted to help women to accept this definition of themselves. This study demonstrates that some women experience negatively the expectations that they *should* be married, and be content to stay home and nurture their children. Therapists need to recognize the effect that these expectations can have on women whose lives do not fit the prescribed roles, or whose feelings do not match what is *supposed to be*. They should also be aware that the way marriage and motherhood are institutionalized creates problems for

women. Career counsellors should be aware of the masculine bias in many tests and institutional policies, and take care not to inadvertently discriminate against women. Further, they should recognize the value of paid work to women, and explore beyond statements about women's "choice" to not work outside of the home, or her "lack of motivation" to acquire a job or succeed in a career. Questions about meaning ("What does that mean to you?") and about context ("Where does that idea, behaviour, feeling, etc. come from?") can help the therapist and client to understand the impact and origin of social expectations on women.

Psychoanalytic and humanistic therapists have recognized the importance of original family members for encouraging healthy or unhealthy patterns of behaviour. This study suggests that an individual's internal dynamics can be better understood when it is recognized that relationships with mothers and fathers are in part a response to cultural ideas concerning the *nature* of females and males. Bringing to an individual woman's awareness the effect on herself and her parents of the social definitions of men as Subject and women as Other can have the benefit of putting the relationships in a broader, more honest and insightful perspective.

This study demonstrates that friendships (or lack thereof) in childhood and adulthood may have a great effect on women's psychological experience. Women's friendships with other women were particularly important because of the mutual understanding, acceptance and support that was experienced. Counsellors would do well to explore the issue of friendships with female clients and if it is determined that friends are a missing aspect of their lives attention could be paid to this problem. Counsellors should also recognize that social status and economic status might have a major effect on women's psychological experience. It should be recognized, too, that factors such as ethnic status, immigrant status, depression or recession, and war have profound effects on women. Finally, the effects on women of various ideologies should be understood by counsellors. This awareness seems especially important in light of the results of this study which demonstrated that there is often a gap between ideology and reality, and that ideology sometimes takes precedence over reality. Again, consciousness-raising can be helpful in giving a perspective to a particular woman's experience. While it may sound reasonable to say that men, too, would benefit from

attention to these various issues, it is expected that they would be differently affected by various factors, given their different formal definition within a patriarchal system.

Arising from this study are four areas of special concern that should be heeded by counsellors: body image, incest, wife battery, and sexual assault and harassment. Feminist therapists have recognized all of these issues as particular to women, and as related to women's subordinate status and devaluation. Women's definition as Other both precedes these issues and prevents society from taking them seriously after the fact. In the past, therapists have been likely to echo judgments of society that women who are fat have no willpower, that incest victims provoked it (or fantasized it), that battered wives deserved it, and that victims of sexual assault or harassment invited it. Research on incest victims has shown that reactions of therapists (and parents) to the victims can be as damaging as the initial incidents. Some feminist therapists maintain that in light of the negative experiences reported by female clients in relation to male therapists, male therapists are likely to identify with the male perpetrators in these incidents. They maintain, therefore, that only feminist or non-sexist therapists (with knowledge and expertise in these areas) should work with female clients in these cases. My experience as a therapist leads me to concur. Further, the results of this study which demonstrated that more than half of the participants would be more comfortable with a female interviewer in a research situation supports this idea. Therefore, it is concluded that with regard to counselling issues that are particular to women, especially those involving violence or abuse, feminist or non-sexist therapists only should work with female clients, given the general lack of understanding of women's experiences today.

Implications for Feminist Theory and the Women's Movement

Implications for feminist theory and for the Women's Movement generally also arise from this study. Feminist theory, in the tradition of deBeauvoir (1952), has long concentrated on women's formal status as Other. This focus no doubt also resulted from the fact that greater numbers of sociologists than psychologists became active in feminist theory building in the 1960s and early 1970s. Further, in radical political circles (from which many of the early feminist activists came) action was often judged on the basis of its being politically correct, not personally relevant. In any case, the

psychological experience of women was not seriously studied, and instead was assumed to simply reflect the formal definition of women as understood by sociologists. Even when feminist historians understood that women were more than simply victims of oppressive systems, the notion of women as complex psychological beings was not fully recognized. Feminist theory has tended to ignore or discount the psychological realm of womens lives, the result of which is that the Women's Movement has been limited in very specific ways. First, it has alienated women who, unconscious of their formal status as Other (because they fit the ideal image of femininity or because they have limited experience) assume they are Subject and blame themselves for their failures. Second, it has accepted the patriarchal definition of women as Other in so far as it has perpetuated the myth of Woman – assuming the reality of one female experience or one feminist consciousness. Differences among women have sometimes been perceived as threats to the Women's Movement, rather than as variances to be integrated and transcended. Third, in underestimating the importance of the psychological dimension of experience, the Women's Movement has neglected to understand that women will be reached on issues which concern them personally, rather than on issues outside the realm of their experience. Thus, if women not associated with the movement are to be reached, they must be asked to speak of their experiences, not told what to think of another's experience. The error here is that women have been once again defined as Other (in relation to a feminist Subject). Finally (and this limitation is inherent to any ideology and must continually be guarded against), feminists must continually distinguish between developing feminist ideology and the reality of women's lives. Then, when a gap between theory and experience is perceived, it will be understood that the possibility exists that the theory should be modified, rather than the actual experience be negated or judged invalid. In other words, the personal meaning of women's experience must be understood and accounted for. Only then can the Women's Movement successfully work toward the goal of women overcoming not just their social definition as Other, but also their psychological Otherness, and build on their experience of themselves as Subject.

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Appendix A

Education, Counselling, Training and Teaching Experience re. Communication Skills

Counselling Experience

Clinical Psychologist, Glenrose Hospital, Edmonton (1972, 1975)

Private practice specializing in problems particular to women,
Edmonton (1975–1982)

Education

Master of Education in Counselling Psychology
University of Alberta, Edmonton, (1972)

Training Experience

Training lay counsellors in communication skills at a Rape Crisis Center (1975, 1976)

Training lay counsellors and homemakers in Social Service Programs (1976 to 1982)

Training interviewers on a Senior Citizen Research Project (1981)

Training lay counsellors at a Battered Womens' Shelter (1982)

Teaching Experience

"Self–awareness and Counselling Skills", Y.M.C.A., Chiang Mai, Thailand (1976)

"Human Relations in the Classroom," Dalhousie University, Halifax (1976)

"Communication and Presentation," "Introduction to the Practicum,"
Administrator of Practicum and Supervision of Practicum Students,
Division of Family Studies, Faculty of Home Economics,
University of Alberta (1976–1977)

"Introduction to Counselling" Department of Education Psychology,
Faculty of Education, University of Alberta (1978)

"Second Look" for women, Faculty of Extension,
University of Alberta (1975, 1976, 1981, 1982)

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Name:

Date:

Initials:

Place:

Age:

Phone No.:

Place of birth:

Nationality:

Ethnic Background:

Religion:

Educational history:

Occupational history:

Financial resources:

Organizational membership:

Volunteer work:

Leisure activities:

Residence history:

Age left parental home:

Marital status: single ( ) married ( ) separated ( )
divorced ( ) widowed ( ) remarried ( )
cohabiting ( ) communal ( ) other ( )

Age when: married separated divorced widowed
remarried cohabiting communal other

How long? married separated divorced widowed
remarried cohabiting communal other

Children: (sex, age, domicile)

Grandchildren:

Great-grand children:

Husband or cohabitor: age

place of birth

nationality

ethnic background

education

occupation

religion

financial resources

Mother: age

place of birth

nationality

ethnic background

education

occupation

religion

Father: age

place of birth

nationality

ethnic background

education

occupation

religion

Siblings: (sex, age, domicile)

Birth order:

Importance of family:

Friendships:

Importance of friendships:

Additional information:

Appendix C

Date: Name:

1. What effect, if any, did the interview have on you – on your thoughts, feelings, ways of looking at things, attitudes, behavior, etc.? Please be specific.

2. Regarding the effects from question 1, what does this mean to you?

3. Have you done, said or experienced anything differently as a result, or partly as a result, of what we talked about in the interview? Please explain.

4. Regarding the differences noted in question 3, what does this mean to you?

5. What did the interview mean to you? Please elaborate.

6. If you were telling a friend about the interview, would you recommend that she do one or not? Why or why not?

7. Have you any other comments about the interview of things that were important to you or that you might think be helpful to me?